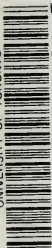


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TORONTO, 1901.



A DESCRIPTION
OF THE
PART OF DEVONSHIRE
BORDERING ON
THE TAMAR AND THE TAVY;

ITS
NATURAL HISTORY,
MANNERS, CUSTOMS, SUPERSTITIONS, SCENERY, ANTIQUITIES,
BIOGRAPHY OF EMINENT PERSONS,
&c. &c.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO
ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

BY MRS. BRAY,
AUTHOR OF 'TRAVELS IN NORMANDY,' 'FITZ OF FITZFORD,' 'THE
TALBA,' 'DE FOIX,' &C.

"I own the power
Of local sympathy that o'er the fair
Throws more divine allurements, and o'er all
The great more grandeur, and my kindling muse,
Fired by the universal passion, pours
Haply a partial lay."

CARRINGTON'S *Dartmoor*.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
MDCCCXXXVI.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
Stamford Street.

PREFACE.

IN the following work, difficult as it may be to please all tastes, the writer has endeavoured to furnish something that may suit each class of readers. For the historian and the antiquary, she has laboured with no small diligence; so that they may not have to complain that her work is wanting in substantial matter. For the tourist, she has given descriptive sketches from observations made on the spot. For those who are fond of biography, she has selected subjects which she hopes may be found of interest; whilst the sketches of living characters are drawn from her own acquaintance with them. For the lovers of poetry and romance, she has given abundance of tales, stories, superstitions, old customs and traditions peculiar to this delightful county. All these matters she has endeavoured to introduce in a manner to give variety, and to relieve the more serious portions of the book: so that if, now and then, the mere general reader

should meet with a subject for which he has no relish, he has but to pass on a few pages, and he will then find that the volumes are not exclusively confined to subjects which, with the curious, or the historian, will probably be deemed of most import.

Mr. Southey suggested the plan with a view to originality;—namely, to make a local work possess, what it had hitherto been deemed little capable of possessing—a general interest.

Holding the opinions of the Laureate in that high respect to which they are entitled, the writer, therefore, has attempted to act on his plan, in the present instance. She has only to add, that wherever she may have fallen short of her object, it has not been for want of either labour or endeavour; and with this conviction, she hopes to meet with candour and indulgence on the part of both critic and reader.

A. E. B.

Vicarage, Tavistock, Devon,
Dec. 4th, 1835.

SUBJECTS

OF

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LETTERS TO THE LAUREATE,

&c. &c.

LETTER I.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Allusion to the original plan of the work being suggested by the Laureate—Sources to be employed in its progress—Climate, situation, and natural advantages of the Town—Anecdote of Charles II.—Dartmoor heights, rivers, and streams: their character—Weather: humorous lines on the same—Mildness of the climate; vegetation; laurels, &c.—Myrtles: account of some extraordinary ones at Warleigh—House Swallows, or Martens—Story of a deep snow: a gentleman imprisoned by it—Origin of the name of Moreton Hampstead—Frozen Swans—A Christening Anecdote of the last generation—Snow in the lap of May—Pulmonary consumption unknown on Dartmoor—Snow-drops; strawberry-plants; butterflies at unusual seasons—Blackbirds and Thrushes—Winter weather—Monumental stones of Romanized British Chiefs—Reasons given by the Writer for going at once to Dartmoor—Vestiges of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of that region.

Vicarage, Tavistock, Devon, Feb. 11, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

EVER since you so kindly suggested that, according to a plan you yourself pointed out, I should attempt giving an account of this place and neighbourhood, I have felt exceedingly desirous to begin the task, that, previous to your honouring Tavistock with the promised visit, you may know what objects, possessing any interest in themselves, or in relation to past times, may be found here worthy your atten-

tion; and though to do justice to such a work as you have suggested to me would require your own powers fully to execute it, and conscious as I am how inadequate I must be to the undertaking, yet I will attempt, as far as I am able, to meet your wishes—well knowing, by my own experience, that you are one of those who receive, with kindness and indulgence, any information that may be gleaned even from the humblest source.

Nor shall I forget that it is your wish I should give not only all the history and biography of this place, and gather up whatever of “tradition and manners can be saved from oblivion,” but also (again to quote your own words) state “every thing about a parish that can be made interesting”—“not omitting some of those ‘short and simple annals’ of domestic life which ought not to be forgotten.” Whilst I attempt, therefore, to give to subjects of historical import the serious attention they demand, I shall likewise endeavour to vary and lighten those more grave parts of my letters, by stating, sometimes, even trifling things, in the hope they may not be altogether void of interest or amusement; for a traveller, though he sets out on a serious pursuit, may be pardoned if he now and then stoops to pick up a wild flower to amuse his mind for a moment, as he journeys on his way. In the accounts which I purpose transmitting to Keswick, I shall not only give you such information as I have myself been able to collect, but I shall also, when I come to speak of Tavistock Abbey, derive some assistance by occasional references to a series of papers written by my brother,* respecting

* Alfred John Kempe, F.S.A.

that monastic foundation, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* about two years ago.

I have, I believe, before mentioned to you, that at a very early period of life, Mr. Bray entertained some thoughts of writing a history of his native town, including descriptive excursions in its vicinity—the latter more particularly embracing the western limits of Dartmoor. Though, from living retired, and not meeting with that encouragement which is so useful and so cheering to young authors, he never threw into a regular form his purposed work; yet he made for it a considerable body of notes, principally derived from his personal observations on the scenes and antiquities that excited his interest and attention. Some of these papers have now become exceedingly valuable, because, unfortunately, many of the memorials of past times, which they most minutely describe, have of late years been seriously injured, or entirely destroyed. In my letters, therefore, I propose, from time to time, to transmit to you very copious extracts from these papers, as it would be both needless and presumptuous in me to attempt giving my own account of those vestiges of antiquity and picturesque scenes, which have already been so carefully investigated and faithfully delineated by my husband.

Before I enter, therefore, upon any historical notices of Tavistock, I shall say something respecting the climate, situation, and natural advantages of our neighbourhood: since I am much disposed to think that the monks, who knew so well how to choose their ground, whenever an abbey was in question, were induced to fix on this spot on account of its many and most desirable localities for the erection of that

noble pile, whose existence gave celebrity to the place, and was as a refuge of honour and security to the learning, science, and piety of those times—which now, with more flippancy than truth, it is so much the fashion to rank under the name of the “dark ages,” though our own boasted light was caught from that flame which they had saved from extinction.

I have invariably found, with persons who rather choose to see the faults and deficiencies than to trace the advantages either of the natural or the moral world, that whenever I speak in praise of Devonshire, or of Tavistock in particular, they oppose to such commendation—the climate; and ask me how I can be partial to a place so constantly exposed to rain? The objection has received even the sanction of royalty, since it is traditionally averred that whilst Charles II. was in Tavistock (in his father’s lifetime, during the civil wars) he was so annoyed by wet weather, that if any body remarked it was a fine day, he was wont to declare ever after, “that, however fine it might be elsewhere, he felt quite sure it must be raining at Tavistock.”

That we have a more than due proportion of wet I will not deny; but it is, I believe, a fault common to mountainous countries; and if we have some discomforts arising from this circumstance, I am convinced that we owe to it many of our advantages also. I have never seen your majestic mountains and lakes; but, judging from a beautiful collection of drawings,* in my own possession, of Cumberland and Westmoreland, I am induced to believe that a very great resemblance may be traced between the

* By the late lamented C. A. Stothard, F.S.A.

valleys of those fine counties and our own; and I rather think that you also have no want of showers.

Our Dartmoor heights are frequently distinguished by bold and abrupt declivities of a mountainous character; our verdure is perpetual—and we owe to those watery clouds, which so much annoyed the lively young prince, not only our rich pastures, but the beauty of our numerous rivers and matchless mountain streams. Of these I shall have occasion to speak hereafter, since, go where we will, they meet us in our walks and rides at every turn—and always like pleasant friends, whose animation and cheerfulness give an additional delight to every surrounding object. So much, indeed, do I feel prejudiced in their favour, that, after having become for so long a time familiar with the tumult and the beauty of our mountain rivers, I thought even the Thames itself sluggish and dull, and very far inferior to the Tavy or the Tamar.

Tavistock owes much of its humidity to the neighbourhood of Dartmoor; for there the clouds, which, owing to the prevalence of the westerly winds in this quarter, pass onward from the Atlantic ocean, are attracted by the summits of its granite tors, and, spreading themselves in every direction, discharge their contents not only on the moor itself, but for many miles around its base. Some ingenious person (whose name I do not know, or it should find a record) has described our weather with much humour in the following lines:—

“ The west wind always brings wet weather,
The east wind wet and cold together,
The south wind surely brings us rain,
The north wind blows it back again.

If the sun in red should set,
The next day surely will be wet;
If the sun should set in gray,
The next will be a rainy day."

Thus you see, my dear sir, poets will sometimes be libellers, and help to keep alive a popular prejudice; for let the weather-grumblers say what they will, I can aver that our climate (whose evil reputation is taken for granted, without sufficient inquiry into its truth), bad as it may be, has, nevertheless, its redeeming qualities; and, amongst others, assuredly it teaches us to know the value of a good thing when we have it, a virtue getting somewhat scarce in these times; for a real fine, dry, sun-shiny day in Tavistock can never pass unnoticed, all living things rejoice in it; and the rivers run and leap and sparkle with such brilliancy, and offer so much to delight the eye and cheer the spirits, that the clouds and the damp and the rain that helped to render them so full and flowing, are all forgotten in the gladness of the genial hour; and the animals, and the birds, with the insect tribe (which is here so numerous and varied) play, or sing, or flutter about with a vivacity that would almost make one believe they hailed a fine day as truly as would King Charles, could he have met with such a recreation on the banks of old Tavy.

The mildness of our climate is so well known, that it needs no eulogy of mine; our laurels and bays are the most beautiful evergreens in the world, and, like those of one who shall be nameless, never fade. Our myrtles, too, flourish in the open air; and we used to boast of some very fine ones that grew in our garden. In a hard frost, however, they should be carefully matted; for the severe weather of January, 1831,

killed ours, in consequence of their having been neglected in this particular. I cannot give a stronger proof of the mildness of our climate, than by mentioning the following circumstance, which I received from my esteemed friend, Mrs. Radcliffe, of Warleigh.

That lady says, in one of her letters to me, "Four myrtle trees grew in the open air, in the recesses of Warleigh House, from twenty-seven to thirty feet in height, the branches spreading nearly from the roots. One was a foot and a half in circumference at the base, and proportionably large to the top. The other three were nearly as high, and one of them was two feet in circumference near the root. Two of the four were of the broad-leaved kind, one small-leaved, and the other double-blossomed, the flowers of which might be gathered from the windows. They were cut down in 1782, from the apprehension of their causing the walls of the house to be damp. The late Mr. Radcliffe, who cut them down, remarks, in a memorandum, 'I have been the more particular in describing these myrtles, as I doubt not they were the largest in England. Four-and-twenty fagots, of the usual size, were made of the brush-wood. The stem, main branches, and principal parts of the roots were in weight 452 lbs.' Tea-caddies, made from the wood, and a block of it, remain in our possession at Warleigh."

I here also may add (as another proof of the mildness of our air) the following particulars, which I have seen stated in Dr. Moore's Catalogue, lately published, of the birds of Devon. The Doctor says, "Of the house swallow, or marten, I have seen the old birds feeding their young on the 20th of September, 1828, at Warleigh; and have been assured,

by a good observer, that martens have frequently been seen flying during mild weather even in the *Christmas week*, at Plympton. These birds build in the hollows of the rocks under Wembury Cliffs, as well as about the houses in this neighbourhood."

Our winters are seldom severe; and when we have snow it does not lie long upon the ground. But Dartmoor, from its great elevation, is far more liable to snow storms and hard weather than we are, who live in a less elevated country. Mr. Bray recollects that, when he was a boy, returning from school at Christmas, three men with shovels went before the carriage as it crossed the moor, in order to remove the snow heaps that, in particular places, would otherwise have rendered it impassable.

The severest winter that I have heard of within the memory of persons now living, occurred about twenty years since, when my husband's father met with an adventure that was a good deal talked of at the time, and found its way into the public prints. Had you crossed the moor to visit us when you were last with your friend Mr. Lightfoot, it is not impossible you might have had a somewhat similar one, since I perfectly well recollect then hearing that, for several days, the road from Moreton to Tavistock was exceedingly difficult of access on account of the drifted snow. I here give you Mr. Bray's adventure.

That gentleman had been at Exeter to take the oaths as portreeve of the borough of Tavistock, and was returning by the nearest road through Moreton Hampstead, situated about twelve miles from Exeter and twenty from home. There was a hard frost on the ground, and the evening being exceedingly cold, Mr. Bray determined to pass the night at a little

comfortless inn (the only one, I believe, which could then boast such a title in the place), and to continue his journey across Dartmoor on the following morning.

He retired to a bed that was anything but one of down, and lay shivering all night, wishing for the hour that was to convey him to his own home, where warmth and comfort might be found at such a season. Morning came; but what was his amazement, when, on getting up, the first thing he beheld was the whole face of the surrounding country covered by such a fall of snow as he had never before witnessed in Devon, his native county. How to get home was the question; and, like many other puzzling queries, it was more easily started than answered.

With much eagerness Mr. Bray now consulted landlord and drivers, on the practicability of so desirable an object. After much deliberation, every possible expedient being suggested and discussed, the thing was found to be impossible, for the roads were literally choked up with snow, not one could be found passable, either on horseback or in a carriage; nothing less than a whole regiment of labourers, could they have been found, to dig out a passage for many miles, could have effected the object; and even then, so thickly did the skies continue to pour down their fleecy showers, such efforts might have been unavailing. To reach Tavistock was out of the question; and he next inquired if it might be practicable to get back to Exeter. But the road in that direction was equally choked up; and the drivers assured him, in their Devonshire phrase, that "not only so thick was the fall of snow, but so hard was the frost, that the *conchables*" (meaning icicles, probably derived from the conch shell, to which indeed

they bear some fanciful resemblance) “hung from the horses’ noses as they stood in the stables.”

There was nothing to be done; and as people must submit to mischances when they cannot run away from them, he was condemned to exercise Job’s virtue, as many others do, because he could not help it. Finding this to be the case, he now began to think how he should contrive to pass the time during his imprisonment, and the landlady was called up and consulted as to what recreations or comforts her house could afford to a distressed gentleman under such circumstances: the prospect was a dreary one, for neither books nor company were to be found. Mr. Bray’s situation, however, being communicated to the clergyman and squire of the place, he became indebted to both for the kind attentions with which they endeavoured to cheer the time of his detention at Moreton Hampstead, that lasted during the space of *three weeks*; and at length, when he did escape, he was obliged to reach his own home by travelling through a most circuitous road.

Thus, in regard to him, are verified all the constituents that are said to have given rise (but with what etymological accuracy I will not vouch) to the name of Moreton Hampstead; *i. e.* a town on the moor instead of home—for tradition says, that it was so denominated from the circumstance of persons returning after Exeter market being oftentimes compelled to pass the night in a few wretched hovels, on the spot where the town now stands, in lieu of home; these hovels having originally been colonized by certain vagabonds and thieves who broke out of Exeter gaol in days of old.*

* I speak here, of course, only of the country tradition; for the

I have heard, likewise, of one or two other instances of the effects of hard weather in this neighbourhood, which I deem worthy of record in the annals of our town, because they are rare. The first relates to some favourite swans of the above-named gentleman. These fine birds were in possession of a piece of water, which had formerly been part of the stew-ponds of the abbey. One morning, during a hard frost, the swans were seen, like the enchanted inhabitants described in one of the Arabian tales, who had become, all on a sudden, statues of marble. There the birds were—white, beautiful, but motionless. On approaching near them, they were found to be dead and frozen—killed during the night by a sudden and severe frost.

I add the following anecdote, not only as a very remarkable circumstance in this my letter on frost and snows, but also as forming the very first I can meet with in the life of my husband, whose claim to being ranked among the worthies of Tavistock I intend by and by to establish, when I come to my biographical department. But as I like my characters, whenever they can do so, to speak for themselves, I shall tell this story in Mr. Bray's own words. It may also afford a useful hint to those who are fond of observing the gradual changes in the manners and customs of polished society; since our modern fine ladies will be somewhat surprised at the politeness of the last generation, on occasions of emergency. Here is the extract from Mr. Bray's letter, addressed to myself when I was in London last year.

real etymology must be from the Saxon *ham stede*,—i. e., the place of the house, &c.

“You must allow this is a very cold May, though a dry one. Mrs. Sleeman, with whom I dined at Whitchurch the other day, told me that it was a common saying among her friends, when any one remarked that the weather was cold in *May*, ‘But not so cold as it was at Mr. Bray’s christening, when, on the *first of May*, so much snow fell in the evening, that the gentlemen who were of the party were obliged to carry home the ladies in their arms.’ I knew not that any thing remarkable had happened on the day of my *christening*; but, by tradition, I knew that on my *birth* day so great was the rejoicing, that after drinking some imperial Tokay, followed, perhaps, by wines less costly, if not even by common punch, the doctor threw his wig into the fire, and burnt it, whether as an offering to Bacchus or Lucina, I know not; but, as I understand the wig was full-bottomed, and well saturated with powder and pomatum, the incense could not have been very fragrant on the occasion.”

These instances of hard weather are not, however, common; for so celebrated is the mildness of the climate in this part of the west, that when the doctors can do no more with their consumptive patients, they often send them into Devon, and many have recovered, whose cases were considered hopeless. I have heard it repeatedly asserted, and from a careful inquiry believe the assertion to be true, that no person born and bred on Dartmoor was ever yet known to die of pulmonary consumption; a certain proof that, however bleak and rainy that place may be, it cannot be unhealthy. This, indeed, is easily accounted for, since the land is high, the air pure, and the waters are carried off by mountain-torrents and streams.

As additional proofs of the mildness of our climate, I may add, also, a few facts that have come under my own observation. I have seen in our garden (which is very sheltered) snow-drops as early as the first week in January. We have some strawberry plants, (I think called the Roseberry, but am not certain,) that grow under the windows of the parlour where I am now writing to you; and so late as the 14th of last November, did I pluck a few well-flavoured strawberries from these plants. The slugs devoured some others that were remaining before they were half ripe. The Rev. Dr. Jago, of Milton Abbot, who is a most intelligent observer of nature, informs me, that on the 18th of last December, he saw in his garden the yellow butterfly, an insect seldom seen in midland counties before the month of March.

I confess that, though a great admirer of birds, I am not sufficiently acquainted with the feathered tribes to understand critically their "life and conversation," a circumstance which renders White in his *Selborne*, and the author of the *Journal of a Naturalist*, so truly delightful; but I believe it is no wonder, though it may be as well to mention it, that our blackbirds and thrushes sang to us at Christmas their carols, so lightly and so sweetly, that I, who had the concert for nothing, was as well pleased with it as an amateur might be to pay the highest price to hear Signor Paganini play his violin.

And now what shall I add more in favour of our poor abused climate and its weather? Shall I tell you that I have often, in the "hanging and drowning" month of November, found lively spirits, sunshine, and beauty on the banks of the Tavy? and

that in December, when the good people of London are lost in fog, in "the dark days before Christmas," as they call them, and substitute gas lights for the sun's beams, I have often enjoyed a lovely walk to Crowndale, the birth-place of Sir Francis Drake, and have experienced that pleasure which I can describe in no language so well as you have done it, in your own winter excursion to Walla Crag; an excursion whose records will endure as long as the scenes it describes, and which will be read with delight so long as there are hearts alive to nature, truth, and feeling. "The soft calm weather has a charm of its own; a stillness and serenity unlike any other season, and scarcely less delightful than the most genial days of spring. The pleasure which it imparts is rather different in kind than inferior in degree: it accords as finely with the feelings of declining life, as the bursting foliage and opening flowers of May with the elastic spirits of youth and hope*."

I am aware that some of my worthy friends in this part of the world, who find consolation in charging all their infirmities to the score of the weather, would be apt to exclaim against me, and say that I have given too favourable an account of that at Tavistock; but I confess that I like, literally speaking, to be *weather-wise*, and to look on the cheerful side even of the most unpromising things; and if we have so much rain, and cannot help it, surely it is as well to consider the bounties which flow upon us from the skies, as to find nothing in them but sore throats and colds, and to fancy that our Devonshire showers fall, like the deluge, on no other errand than that of destruction.

* See Colloquies, vol. i., p. 116.

And now, my dear Sir, having commenced my letters, like a true native of England, with talking about nothing but the weather, I shall give you my reasons for proposing to take you, in the next, to Dartmoor, before I set you down amongst the ruins of our abbey. First, then, Tavistock owes not only many of its advantages, but its very name to its *river*, which rises on Dartmoor. And though the glory of our town, in after ages, was its stately abbey; yet as the river Tavy has associated its appellation with the place from times beyond human record, that fact is a sufficient presumption that it possessed, in the aboriginal age, a certain degree of importance.

This, indeed, we may consider as confirmed by the inscribed monumental stones of Romanized British chiefs that have been found in this neighbourhood, two of which are still preserved as obelisks in our garden. On Dartmoor, where this river rises, we find such abundant vestiges of the aboriginal inhabitants of this part of the west, that very imperfect would be any history of Tavistock which commenced in the Saxon era. I know there are those who have been sceptical about the Druidical remains on the moor; but no one should venture to deny the existence of what they have never seen, only because they have never heard of it. We will begin, therefore, upon Dartmoor in the next letter; and I trust you will find it not altogether unworthy your attention, as it has much engaged that of,

My dear Sir,
Your most gratefully obliged
and faithful servant,

A. E. BRAY.

LETTER II.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS :—Dartmoor—Origin of its name—made into a forest by King John—Henry III. gave it bounds—Edward III. bestowed it on the Black Prince—Its extent, &c.—Impression it is calculated to produce on the mind—Granite Tors—Sunshine unfavourable to the Moorland scenery ; various effects produced by the clouds, times, and seasons—Rivers, their character, &c.—Variety and beauty of the mosses and lichens—Channels worn by the rivers—Crags and cliffs—Tavy Cleave, its grandeur—Scenery of the Moor where combined with objects of veneration, their founders being the Druid priests and bards—The Moor barren of trees—Soil—Primary and secondary rock—Pasture for cattle—Peat—A hut ; the crook of Devon ; peasantry of the Moor, children, &c. described—Language of the people. Origin of the word ‘ Logan ’—Snow-storm on the Moor, and the adventures of a traveller, with a traveller’s tale.

Vicarage, Tavistock, Feb. 20, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

DARTMOOR, or the forest of Dartmoor, (as it is still called in all grants and deeds of the Duchy of Cornwall,) is situated in the western limits of the county of Devon. It is thirty miles in extent from north to south, and fourteen from east to west. Few places are really less known, and few are more deserving of attention. It is considered to derive its name from the river Dart, which rises on the moor, in the midst of a bog at Cranmere pool. This river, which is sometimes written Darant, is supposed to be called the Dart from the remarkable rapidity of its course. “ Dartmoor was,” says Risdon, “ made into a forest by King John, and not

only confirmed by King Henry III., but had bounds set out by him in a charter of perambulation." And Edward III. gave it to his son the Black Prince, when he invested him with the title of Duke of Cornwall.

This vast tract of land, which has been computed to contain 100,000 acres,* is distinguished by heights so lofty and rugged, that they may in some parts be termed mountainous; and though a large portion of the high road, over which the traveller passes in crossing it, presents an unvaried scene of solitariness and desolation, yet to those who pursue their investigation of the moor beyond the ordinary and beaten track, much will be found to delight the artist, the poet, and the antiquary.

By a mind alive to those strong impressions which the vast and the majestic never fail to create, Dartmoor will be viewed with a very different feeling to that experienced by the common observer who declares it is "all barren." To him, no doubt, it is so: since, in its bleak heights, he is sensible to nothing but the chilling air; in its lofty tors, still rude as they were created, he sees nothing but bare rocks; and in its circles of stones, its cairns and its fallen cromlechs, he finds no associations to give them an interest by connecting them with the history and manners of ages long past away.

The feelings inspired by visiting Dartmoor are of a very different order from those experienced on viewing our beautiful and cultivated scenery. The rich pastures, the green hills, the woodland declivi-

* There are said to be 20,000 acres in addition to this, distinguished by the name of the Commons.

ties of Devon ; its valleys, alive with sparkling streams, and skirted by banks whose verdure never fails, studded as they are with cottages and farms, convey to the mind that sense of pleasure which renders the spirits cheerful and buoyant. There is nothing in such scenes to raise a thought allied to wonder or to fear ; we know that we could dwell among them in security and peace ; they delight and soften the mind, but they seldom raise in it those deep and impressive reflections, which scenes such as Dartmoor affords seldom fail to create.

The peculiar character of the moor is derived from its granite tors ; these are mostly found on the summits of its numerous heights, and lie piled, mass on mass, in horizontal strata. Some portion of dark iron-stone is found amongst them. There are, also, rocks of secondary formation, and several that are considered by geologists to be of volcanic fusion.

No one who would wish to view the moor in all its grandeur should go there on a very fine or rather sunny day : for it then possesses none of those effects produced by that strong opposition of light and shadow, which mountain-scenery and rugged rocks absolutely require to display the bold character of their outline, and the picturesque combinations of their craggy tops. Indeed, most scenery derives its pictorial effect principally from the clouds, and even the most beautiful loses half its beauty when viewed in unbroken light. I have seen Dartmoor under most of the changes produced by sunshine, cloud, or storm. The first shows it to disadvantage ; for the monotony of its barren heights then becomes predominant. A gathering storm

gives it a character of sublimity ; but a day such as artists call a "painter's day" is that which gives most interest to moorland scenery.

The pencil is more adapted than the pen to delineate such scenes as will then be found on the moor. I have often seen it when, as the clouds passed slowly on, their shadowy forms would fall upon the mountain's breast, and leave the summit glittering in the sun with a brilliancy that might bear comparison with the transparent hues of the richest stained glass. The purple tints of evening here convey to the mind visions of more than natural beauty ; so etherially do the distant heights mingle themselves with the clouds, and reflect all those delicate and subdued tints of sunset, that render the dying day like the departure of some beneficent prince, who leaves the world over which his course has cast the lustre of his own "long and lingering" glory.

And often have I seen the moor so chequered and broken with light and shade, that it required no stretch of the imagination to convert many a weather-beaten tor into the towers and ruined walls of a feudal castle. Nay, even human forms, gigantic in their dimensions, sometimes seemed to start wildly up as the lords and natural denizens of this rugged wilderness. But who shall picture the effects produced by a gathering tempest? when, as the poet of such scenes so truly describes—"The cloud of the desert comes on, varying in its form with every blast ; the valleys are sad around, and fear, by turns, the storm, as darkness is rolled above." In these moments, the distant heights are seen in colours of the deepest purple, whilst a solitary ray of the sun

will sometimes break through the dense masses of cloud and vapour, and send forth a stream of light that resembles in brilliancy, nor less in duration, the flash of "liquid fire."

The rivers, those veins of the earth that, in their circulation, give life, health, and vigour to its whole frame, here flow in their greatest purity. So constant is the humidity produced by the mists and vapours which gather on these lofty regions, that they are never dry. Sometimes they are found rising, like the Dart, in solitude and silence, or springing from so small a source that we can scarcely fancy such a little rill to be the fountain that sustains the expansive waters of the Tavy and the Teign. But all these rivers, as they pass on, receive the contributions of a thousand springs, till, gathering as they flow, they become strong, rapid, and powerful in their course. Sometimes, bounding over vast masses of rock, they exhibit sheets of foam of a dazzling whiteness: and frequently form numberless little cascades as they fall over the picturesque combinations of those broken slabs of granite which present, growing on their surface, the greatest variety of mosses and lichens to be found throughout the whole county of Devon.

Often do the waters play upon rocks literally covered with moss, that has in it the blackness and richness of the finest velvet. In others, the lichen is white as the purest marble, or varied with the gradations of greys, browns, and ochres of the deepest or the palest tints. There is also to be found, on the moor, a small and beautiful moss of the brightest scarlet; and nothing can be more delicate than the fibrous and filigree formation of various other species,

that can alone be compared to the most minute works in chased silver, which they so much resemble in colour and in form.

There are scenes on the moor, hereafter to be noticed more particularly, where the rivers rush through the narrow channels that they have torn asunder at the base of the finest eminences of overhanging crag and cliff. Such is Tavy Cleave, an object that fills the mind with a sense of surprise mingled with delight. There, after heavy showers or sudden storms, is heard the roar of the Tavy, with a power that renders the observer mute whilst he listens to it. There the waters flow wildly forward as their rush is reverberated amidst the clefts and caverns of the rocks; and, as they roll their dark and troubled course, they give to the surrounding scene that character of awe and sublimity which so strongly excites the feelings of an imaginative mind; for there the deepest solitude to be found in nature is broken by the incessant agitation of one of the most powerful of her elements. Such a contest of waters—of agitation amidst repose—might be compared, by a poet, to a sudden alarm of battle amidst a land of peace, and those struggling waves to numerous hosts, as they press on with eagerness and fury to the field of strife.

Indeed, the whole of the river-scenery of Dartmoor is full of interest, more especially where it becomes combined with those objects of veneration which claim as their founders that “deathless brotherhood” the Druid priests and bards of the most ancient inhabitants of the West. Except in a few instances, the moor is totally barren of trees; but they are not wanted; since its vastness,—its

granite masses,—its sweeping outlines of height or precipice, are best suited to that rugged and solemn character which is more allied to grandeur and sublimity than to the cheerfulness and placidity of a cultivated or woodland-landscape.

The soil of the moor is of a deep black colour, and in most parts it is merely a formation of decayed vegetable matter, covering a foundation principally of granite; for it is not altogether confined to this primary rock, as occasionally there are others of secondary formation. Though there are some bogs as well as marshes on the moor, yet the soil affords the finest pasture for cattle in summer, and produces a vast quantity of peat, that supplies fuel throughout the whole of the year; whilst the sod also is useful in another way, since a good deal of it is employed in the building of huts, generally composed of loose stones, peat, and mud, in which the few and scattered peasantry of the moor are content to make their dwelling. A hardy and inoffensive race, they, at no very remote period, were looked upon as being little better than a set of savages; and to this day they are assuredly a very rude and primitive people. A Dartmoor family and hut may be worth noticing; and a sketch of one will, generally speaking, afford a tolerable idea of all, though there are exceptions, a few comfortable cottages being scattered here and there upon the forest. Imagine a hut, low and irregular, composed of the materials above-named, and covered with a straw roof, or one not unfrequently formed with green rushes, so that at a little distance it cannot be distinguished from the ground on which it stands. Near the hut there is often seen an out-house, or shed, for domestic purposes, or as a shelter

for a cart, if the master of the tenement is rich enough to boast such a convenient relief to his labour in carrying home peat from the moor.

But this cart is a very rare possession ; since the moormen most commonly convey their peat, and all things else, on what is called a *crook*, on the back of a poor, patient, and shaggy-looking donkey. You will say, "What is this crook?" and I must answer, that I can really hardly tell you ; unless (as did Mr. Bray for the late King, when he was Prince of Wales, at the request of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt) I make a drawing of it, and send it in my letter. This I hope to do when I can find leisure, together with a few more sketches by way of illustrating any subject that may absolutely require the aid of the pencil. In the interval, try if you can understand such an account as the following, which I confess is an attempt to describe what is indescribable. Imagine the poor donkey, or a half-starved horse, laden first with a huge pack-saddle, never intended to bear anything else but a crook ; and across this saddle is placed that very machine, which is made of wood, and so constructed as to keep from falling to the ground any load of peat, firewood, &c., that is frequently piled up twice as high as the poor beast that bears it. At either side of this machine arise two *crooked* pieces of wood, turning outward like the inverted tusks of the walrus. These in themselves have a somewhat formidable appearance, but more so when, after they are unloaded, the thoughtless driver, as too frequently happens, places his pitchfork in an oblique direction from the saddle to one of the shafts of the crook : for thus, whilst the animals are advancing at a brisk pace and in no very regular

order, the prong of it may lacerate the leg of any unhappy horseman that meets them, and has not time or dexterity to avoid their onset. The crook is here known by the name of the Devil's Toothpick.

I may here perhaps be permitted to mention an anecdote of the late Mr. Bray, connected with the present subject. On ascending a hill in an open carriage near Moreton, he overtook a man on foot who had the care of several horses, laden with faggots on crooks. From the steepness of the acclivity, he was obliged to guide his horse in a somewhat sinuous direction, and he soon found that some or other of the crook horses invariably crossed him on the road, and considerably impeded his progress. This he was satisfied was owing to two words of the driver, namely, *gee* and *ree*, which he took a malicious pleasure in calling out contrary to what he ought,—making them go to the right when they should have gone to the left, and *vice versâ*. Mr. Bray remonstrated, but in vain. At length, when he reached the brow of the hill, he said to the churl, “You have had your frolic, and now I will have mine;” and, not only whipping his own horse but the others also, he put them into a full gallop. The consequence was that they all threw off their loads one after the other, the driver begging him in vain to stop, and receiving no other answer than “You have had your frolic, and now I have mine.”

The manners of the peasantry may in some measure be estimated by their dwellings. They are not overclean; and though they are surrounded on all sides by mountain-streams and rills of the purest water, I have generally found, close to their doors, as if they delighted in the odour it produced, a pool

into which are thrown old cabbage-leaves and every sort of decaying vegetable matter.

Out of these huts, as you pass along, you will see, running to gaze upon you, some half-dozen or more of children, not overburdened with clothes, and such as they have, like Joseph's coat, being often of many colours, from the industrious patching of their good mothers. The urchins, no doubt, are not bred up as Turks, since frequent ablution makes no part of their devotion. Now and then, however, you find a clean face, which is as rare as a dry day on Dartmoor; and when this is the case, it is generally found worth keeping so, as it discloses a fine, fat, round pair of cheeks, as red,—I must not say as roses though writing to a poet, for the simile would be much too delicate for my Dartmoor cupids,—but as red as a piece of beef, which is a great deal more like the cheeks in question. Legs and arms they have that would suit the infant Hercules; and if they had any mind to play off the earliest frolic of that renowned hero, the moor would supply the means, since snakes and adders it has in abundance, and a good thing it would be if they were all strangled.

The hair of these children, which, to borrow the language of Ossian, “plays in the mountain winds,” is generally the sole covering of their heads. This sometimes is bleached nearly white with the sun; and, as you pass along, there they stand and stare at you with all their eyes. One token of civilized life they invariably give, as they salute you with that sort of familiar bob of the head now become a refined mode of salutation in fashionable life, so widely differing from the bowing and bending of the days

of Sir Charles Grandison, when no gentleman could salute another as he ought to do without removing from his head a little three-cornered cocked-hat, and when the management of a lady's fan was an essential part of her good manners in the dropping of a courtesy.

But I am digressing: to return then to the subject. A peasant, born and bred on the moor, is generally found to be a simple character, void of guile, and, as Othello says of himself,—

—————“ Rude in speech,
And little versed in the set phrase of peace ;”

and to this may be added, very unintelligible to all who are not accustomed to the peculiar dialect of the moor. It is not English; it is not absolutely Devonshire, but a language compounded, I should fancy, from all the tongues,—Celtic, Saxon, Cornish,—and, in short, from any language that may have been spoken in these parts during the last 2000 years. I would attempt to give you a few specimens, but I cannot possibly guess how I am to *spell* their words so as to convey to you any idea of them. I have been assured that they retain some British words resembling the Welsh, and that now and then they use the form of the old Saxon plural, for they sometimes talk about their *housen* and their *shooen*; and I once heard a woman tell one of her daughters, in a Dartmoor cottage, “to log the child's cradle.” There, thought I, is a British word; log means to rock, hence logging, or logan stone. Borlase said he could never trace the origin of the word logan. What a pity he had not been driven by a shower of rain into a Dartmoor cottage, where there was a young child and a mother anxious to rock it asleep.

How the ears of a real antiquary would have tingled to have heard but that single expression from the mouth of a peasant, born and bred in the very heart of Druid antiquity.

Though it certainly is a great libel on the poor people of Dartmoor to consider them, as was the case about a hundred years ago, to be no better than savages, yet, no doubt, they are still of "manners rude," and somewhat peculiar to themselves; but as an instance, like a fact in law, carries more weight with it than a discussion, take therefore the following as an illustration. It was related to me but last night, by my husband, who had it from a gentleman who, I conclude, received it from the gentleman to whom the circumstance occurred; and as all these parties who related it were, as Glanville says of his relators when telling his tales about old witches, "of undoubted credit and reputation and not at all credulous," I do not know that you will receive it anything the worse for coming to you at the fourth hand. Well, then, once upon a time, as the old story-books say, there was a gentleman who, mounted on a horse, (at the breaking up of a very hard and long frost, when the roads were only just beginning to be passable,) set out in order to cross over Dartmoor. Now, though the thaw had commenced, yet it had not melted the snow-heaps so much as he expected: he got on but slowly, and towards the close of day it began to freeze again. The shades of night were drawing all around him, and the mighty tors, which seemed to grow larger and taller as he paced forward, gradually became enveloped in vapour and in mist, and the traveller with his horse did not know what to do.

To reach Tavistock that night would be impossible, as a fresh snow-storm was fast falling in every direction, and would add but another impediment to the difficulties or dangers of his way. To stay out all night on the cold moor, without shelter or food, must be certain death, and where shelter was to be found somewhat puzzled the brains of our bewildered traveller. In this dilemma he still paced on, and at length he saw at a distance a certain dark object but partially covered with snow. As he drew nearer, his heart revived; and his horse, which seemed to understand all the hopes and fears of his master, pricked up his ears and trotted, or rather slid, on a little faster. The discovery which had thus rejoiced the heart of man and beast was not only that of the dark object in question, but also a thick smoke, which rose like a stately column in the clear frosty air from its roof, and convinced him that what he now beheld must be a cottage.

He presently drew nigh and dismounted; and the rap that he gave with the butt-end of his whip upon the door was answered by an old woman opening that portal of hope to him and his distresses. He entered and beheld a sturdy peasant, that proved to be the old woman's son, and who sat smoking his pipe over a cheerful and blazing peat fire. The traveller's wants were soon made known. An old out-house with a litter of straw accommodated the horse, which, it is not unlikely, ate up his bed for the want of a better supper; but this is a point not sufficiently known to be asserted.

Of the affairs of the traveller I can speak with more certainty; and I can state, on the very best authority, that he felt very hungry and wanted a

bed. Though there was but one besides the old woman's in the house, the son, who seemed to be a surly fellow, promised to give up his own bed for the convenience of the gentleman; adding that he would himself sleep that night in the old settle by the chimney-corner. The good dame busied herself in preparing such food as the house could afford for the stranger's supper; and at length he retired to rest. Neither the room nor the bedding were such as promised much comfort to a person accustomed to the luxuries of polished life; but as most things derive their value from comparison, even so did these mean lodgings, for they appeared to him to be possessed of all that heart could desire, when he reflected how narrowly he had escaped being perhaps frozen to death that night on the bleak moor. Before going to rest, he had observed in the chamber a large oak-chest: it was somewhat curious in form and ornament, and had the appearance of being of very great antiquity. He noticed or made some remarks upon it to the old woman who had lighted him up stairs in order to see that all things in his chamber might be as comfortable as circumstances would admit for his repose. There was something, he thought, shy and odd about the manner of the woman when he observed the chest; and, after she was gone, he had half a mind to take a peep into it. Had he been a daughter instead of a son of Eve he would most likely have done so; but, as it was, he forbore, and went to bed as fast as he could.

He felt cold and miserable; and who that does so can ever hope for a sound or refreshing sleep? His was neither the one nor the other, for the woman and the chest haunted him in his dreams; and a

hollow sound, as if behind his bed's head, suddenly started him out of his first sleep, when a circumstance occurred which, like the ominous voice to Macbeth, forbade him to sleep more. As he started up in bed, the first thing he saw was the old chest that had troubled him in his dreams. There it lay in the silvery silence of the moonlight, looking cold and white, and, connected with his dream, a provoking and even alarming object of his curiosity. And then he thought of the hollow sound which seemed to call him from his repose, and the old woman's odd manner when he had talked to her about the chest, and the reserve of her sturdy son, and, in short, the traveller's own imagination supplied a thousand subjects of terror; indeed so active did it now become in these moments of alarm that it gave a tongue to the very silence of the night, and action even to the most inanimate things; for he looked and looked again, till he actually fancied the lid of the chest began to move slowly up before his eyes!

He could endure no more; but, starting from his bed, he rushed forward, grasped the lid with trembling hands, and raised it up at once. Who shall speak his feelings when he beheld what that fatal chest now disclosed?—a human corpse, stiff and cold, lay before his sight! So much was he overcome with the horror of his feelings, that it was with extreme difficulty he could once more reach the bed.

How he passed the rest of the night he scarcely remembered; but one thought, but one fear, possessed and agonized his whole soul. He was in the house of murderers! he was a devoted victim! there was no escape: for where, even if he left the chamber,

at such an hour, in such a night, where should he find shelter, on the vast, frozen, and desolate moor? He had no arms, he had no means of flight; for if plunder and murder might be designed, he would not be suffered to pass out, when the young man (now, in his apprehension a common trafficker in the blood of the helpless) slept in the only room below, and through which he must pass if he stirred from where he was.

To dwell on the thoughts and feelings of the traveller, during that night of terror, would be an endless task; rather let me hasten to say that it was with the utmost thankfulness, and not without some surprise, that he found himself alive and undisturbed by any midnight assassin, when the sun once more arose and threw the cheerful light of day over the monotonous desolation of the moor. Under any circumstances, and even in the midst of a desert, there is pleasure and animation in the morning; like hope in the young heart, it renders all things beautiful. If such are its effects under ordinary circumstances, what must it have been to our traveller, who hailed the renewed day as an assurance of renewed safety to his own life? He determined, however, to hasten away; to pay liberally, but to avoid doing or saying anything to awaken suspicion.

On descending to the kitchen he found the old woman and her son busily employed in preparing no other fate for him than that of a good breakfast; and the son, who the night before was probably tired out with labour, had now lost what the gentleman fancied to have been a very surly humour. He gave his guest a country salutation, and hoping "his honour" had found good rest, proceeded to recom-

mend the breakfast in the true spirit, though in a rough phrase, of honest hospitality; particularly praising the broiled bacon, as "Mother was reckoned to have a curious hand at salting un in."

Daylight, civility, and broiled bacon, the traveller now found to be most excellent remedies against the terrors, both real and otherwise, of his own imagination. The fright had disturbed his nerves, but the keen air of those high regions, and the savoury smell of a fine smoking rasher, were great restoratives. And as none but heroes of the old school of romance ever live without eating, I must say our gentleman gave convincing proofs that he understood very well the exercise of the knife and fork. Indeed so much did he feel re-assured and elevated by the total extinction of all his personal fears, that, just as the good woman was broiling him another rasher, he out with the secret of the chest, and let them know that he had been somewhat surprised by its contents; venturing to ask, in a friendly tone, for an explanation of so remarkable a circumstance.

"Bless your heart, your honour, 'tis nothing at all," said the young man, "'tis only fayther!"

"Father! your father!" cried the traveller, "what do you mean?"

"Why you see, your honour," replied the peasant, "the snaw being so thick, and making the roads so cledgey-like, when old fayther died, two weeks ago, we couldn't carry un to Tavistock to bury un; and so mother put un in the old box, and salted un in: mother's a fine hand at salting un in."

Need a word more be said of the traveller and his breakfast; for so powerful was the association of ideas in a mind as imaginative as that of our gentle-

man, that he now looked with horror upon the smoking rasher, and fancied it nothing less than a slice of "old fayther." He got up, paid his lodging, saddled his horse; and quitting the house, where surprise, terror, joy, and disgust had, by turns, so powerfully possessed him, he made his way through every impediment of snow and storm. And never could he afterwards be prevailed upon to touch bacon, since it always brought to mind the painful feelings and recollections connected with the adventure of "salting un in."

LETTER III.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Wild animals in ancient times on the Moor—Old custom of Fenwell rights—Banditti once common—Road across the Moor; mode of travelling before it was made—Atmosphere, remarkable—Thunder and lightning, not common—Tradition of Conjuring Time noticed—Witchcraft, still a matter of belief—Extremes of heat and cold—Shepherd lost; his dog—Two boys lost in the snow—Hot vapour on the Moor, its appearance—Scepticism respecting the druidical remains, noticed; its being wholly unsupported by reason, knowledge, or enquiry—The Damnonii, their origin with the rest of the ancient Britens; their history, &c. &c.—Camden quoted—Aboriginal inhabitants of the Moor; their Druids, &c.—Orders of the Bards—Poetry—Regal power assumed by the Priesthood—Priests and Bards distinct orders—Sacred groves, &c.—Allegory of Lucian—Tacitus quoted, and other authorities respecting the Druids—Their customs, laws, &c., briefly noticed—Vestiges of British antiquity at Dartmoor—Spoliation there carried on—an assault made on the antiquities of the Moor a few years ago, related.

Vicarage, Tavistock, February 23rd, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE somewhere seen it asserted that, in former times, Dartmoor was infested by many wild animals; amongst them the wolf and the bear: for the latter I have found no authority that would justify me in saying such was the case; but Prince, I see, mentions in his ‘Worthies of Devon,’ that, in the reign of King John, the Lord Brewer of Tor Brewer received a licence from his sovereign to hunt the fox, the wild-cat, and the wolf throughout the whole of the county of Devon: Dartmoor, no doubt, afforded a fine field for such a chase. And I may

here notice that there is a tradition (mentioned also by Polwhele) amongst the people on the borders of the moor, which they state to have derived from their forefathers, "that the hill country was inhabited whilst the vallies were full of serpents and ravenous beasts."

There is, likewise, an old custom, commonly referred to as the "Fenwell rights," which supports the truth of the assertion respecting the *wolves*: since the "*Venwell* rights," as the peasantry call them, are nothing less than a right claimed by the inhabitants of a certain district of pasturage and turf from the fens free of all cost: a privilege handed down to them through many generations, as a reward for services done by their ancestors in destroying the wolves, which, in early times, so much infested the forest of Dartmoor. Many stories and traditions are, indeed, connected with these wild regions: some of which, in due season, I purpose giving you; and many remarkable customs, now falling fast into decay, were there practised; whose origin, as I shall endeavour to show, may be traced back even so far as the earliest times of which we have any authentic records, subsequent to the invasion of Britain under Cæsar.

It is nothing wonderful that such an extensive waste as the moor, so full of rocks, caverns, tors, and intricate recesses, should have been, in all ages, the chosen haunt of banditti; and in former days they did not fail to avail themselves of its facilities for conveying away plunder, or for personal security against detection; whilst the gentry of those times, unless in a numerous and armed company, feared to cross the moor, so dangerous as it was known to be

from lawless men, and so reputed to be haunted by the spirits and pixies of credulity and superstition.

There is now an excellent road across the moor; as I trust you will find when you next travel westward. This road was made between sixty and seventy years ago; and till that work was executed it was most perilous to the traveller: for if he missed his line of direction, or became entangled amidst rocks and marshy grounds, or was enveloped in one of those frequent mists, here so much to be dreaded, that prevented him even from seeing the course of the sun above his head, he had no alternative, but to follow, as well as the difficulty of the way would admit, the course of a river or stream; and if this last resource failed, he was likely to be lost on the moor, and, in the depth of winter, to be frozen to death, as many have there been.

The atmosphere of Dartmoor deserves particular notice; it is at all times humid. The rain, which frequently falls, almost without intermission, for many weeks together, is generally small; and resembles more a Scotch mist than a shower. Sometimes, however, it will pour down in torrents; but storms, attended with thunder and lightning, are not very common: and whenever they do occur, one would think that the peasantry still retained the superstitious awe of the aboriginal inhabitants of the moor, who worshipped thunder as a god under the name of Tiranis; for they call a storm of that description *conjuring time*, from the thorough persuasion that such effects are solely produced by the malice of some potent spirit or devils: though, mingling their Pagan superstitions with some ideas founded on Christianity, (just as their forefathers

did when, on their first conversion, they worshipped the sun and moon, as well as the cross,) they make a clergyman to have some concern in the business: for while "conjuring time" is going on, he, in their opinion, is as hard at work as the devils themselves, though in an opposite fashion; since, on all such occasions, they say, "that somewhere or other in the county there's a parson a laying of a spirit all in the Red Sea, by a talking of Latin to it; his clerk, after each word, ever saying Amen."

Indeed, our superstitions here are so numerous, and so rooted amongst the poor and the lower classes, that, I think, before I bring these letters to a close, I shall have it in my power not a little to divert you. Witchcraft is still devoutly believed in by most of the peasantry of Devon; and the distinctions (for they are nice ones) between a witch and a white witch, and being bewitched, or only *overlooked* by a witch, crave a very careful discrimination on the part of their historian.

The extremes of cold and heat are felt upon the moor with the utmost intensity. Many a poor creature has been there found frozen to death amidst its desolate ravines. I remember having heard of one instance, that happened many years ago, of a poor shepherd who so perished, and was not found till some weeks after his death: when his dog, nearly starved, (and no one could even conjecture how the faithful animal had sustained *his* life during the interval,) was discovered wistfully watching near the body of his unfortunate master.

I have also learnt that, a few years since, two lads, belonging to a farm in the neighbourhood, were sent out to look after some strayed sheep on the moor.

A heavy fall of snow came on, and the boys, not returning, the farmer grew uneasy, and a search after them was commenced without delay. They were both discovered, nearly covered with snow, benumbed, and in a profound sleep. With one of the poor lads, it was already the sleep of death; but the other was removed in this state of insensibility, and was at length, with much difficulty, restored to life.

On a sultry day, the heat of the moor is most oppressive; as shade or shelter are rarely to be found. At such a time, there is not, perhaps, a cloud in the sky: the air is perfectly clear and still; yet, even then, you have but to look steadily upon the heights and tors, and, to your surprise, they will appear in waving agitation. So thin, indeed, is the hot vapour which on such sultry days is constantly exhaled from the moor, that I can only compare it to the reeking of a lime-kiln. The atmosphere is never, perhaps, other than humid, except in such cases, or in a very severe frost. I have heard my husband say that the wine kept in the cellars of his father's cottage on Dartmoor (for the late Mr. Bray built one there, and made large plantations near the magnificent river-scenery of the Cowsic) acquired a flavour that was truly surprising; and which, in a great degree, was considered to arise from the bottles being constantly in a damp state. This perpetual moisture upon them was wont to be called "Dartmoor dew;" and all who tasted the wine declared it to be the finest flavoured of any they had ever drunk in England.

Before I enter upon a minute account of the British antiquities of Dartmoor, it will, perhaps, be

advisable to offer a few remarks, which, I trust, may assist in throwing some light upon a subject hitherto treated with slight notice, and not unfrequently with absolute scepticism; since some, who have never even investigated these remains upon the moor,—who have never even seen them,—have, notwithstanding, taken upon themselves to assert that there are none to be found. But assertion is no proof; and those who shun the labour, patience, and inquiry which are sometimes necessary in order to arrive at truth must not wonder if they often miss the path that leads to it; but they should at least leave it fairly open to others, who are willing to continue the search.

It is not my purpose in this letter to enter upon any discussion as to who were the first settlers in this part of Britain. Wishing to inform myself upon the subject, many and opposite opinions have I examined; and the only impression that I have received from these discussions was, that the writers themselves were too much puzzled in the mazes of controversy to convince their readers, however much they might have convinced themselves, that each, exclusively, entertained the right opinion.

It seems to me, therefore, the wisest way to rest satisfied that the Damnonii had one common origin with the rest of the ancient Britons; and without attempting to penetrate that obscurity which has defied for so many ages the ingenuity of the most patient investigators, to admit without scepticism the commonly-received opinion—namely, that the first settlers in this part of the west were, like the people of Gaul, descended from the Celtæ, a branch of the nations from the east. Devonshire, according

to Camden, was called Duffneunt, deep valleys, by the Welsh; and certainly a more appropriate name could never have been chosen for a country so peculiarly characterized by the beauty and richness of its valleys, watered as they are by pure and rapid rivers or mountain streams*.

The Damnonii, perhaps, were less warlike than the inhabitants of other kingdoms of the Britons; since they readily submitted to the Roman power, and joined in no revolts that were attempted against it: a circumstance which, according to some historians, was the cause that so little was said about them by the Roman writers. The Damnonii were distinguished for the numbers and excellence of their flocks and herds. It is possible that this very circumstance might have rendered them less warlike than their neighbours, since the occupations of a pastoral life naturally tend to nourish a spirit of peace; whereas, the toils, the tumult, and the dangers to which the hunters of those days were constantly exposed in the chase, which so justly has been called "an image of war," must, on the contrary, have excited and kept alive a bold and restless spirit, that delighted in nothing so much as hostile struggles and achievements in the field.

But still more probable, perhaps, is the conjecture that the Damnonii, from their long and frequent intercourse with the Phœnicians, who traded to their

* Camden says, "the hither country of the Damnonii is now called Denshire; by the Cornish Britons Dennan; by the Welsh Britons Duffneynt,—that is, deep valleys; because they live everywhere here in lowly bottoms; by the English Saxons, Deumerchine, from whence comes the Latin Devonia, and that contracted name, used by the vulgar, Denshire. It was certainly styled Dyfneint by the Welsh. See Richards *in voce*."

coast, as well as to that of Cornwall, for tin, had become more civilized than the inhabitants of the other kingdoms of Britain. Possibly, indeed, they had learnt to know the value of those arts of peace to which a warlike life is so great an enemy. Hence might have arisen their more willing submission to their Roman conquerors, who were likely to spread yet further amongst them the arts and advantages of civilized society. This is mere conjecture, but surely it is allowable—since there must have been some cause that operated powerfully on a whole kingdom to make it rest satisfied with being conquered; and we have no evidence, no hint even given by the earliest writers, to suspect the courage or manly spirit of the aboriginal inhabitants of Devon.

So celebrated were the British priesthood at the time of the invasion of the Romans under Cæsar, and so far had their fame extended into foreign lands, that we know, on the authority of his writings, “such of the Gauls as were desirous of being perfectly instructed in the mysteries of their religion (which was the same as that of the Britons), always made a journey into Britain for the express purpose of acquiring them.” And in these kingdoms, as in other nations of Celtic origin, it is most likely that those who preferred peace to tumult,—who had a thirst after the knowledge of their age,—or who liked better the ease secured to them by having their wants supplied by others than the labour of toiling for themselves, became the disciples of the Druids. Their groves and cells, appropriated to study and instruction, afforded security and shelter; and there, undisturbed by outward circumstances,

they could drink of that fountain of sacred knowledge which had originally poured forth a pure and undefiled stream from its spring in the Eastern world, but had become turbid and polluted as it rolled through the dark groves of druidical superstition.

In these groves, it is believed, they learnt the secret of the one true and only God, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. But this was held too excellent for the people, who it was deemed required a grosser doctrine, one more obvious to the senses. To them, therefore, it was not fully disclosed; it was not to be shown in all its simple and natural lustre; the doctrines which "came of men" were added to it; and these being of the earth, like the vapours which arise from it, ascended towards Heaven only to obscure its light*.

The poetry of the ancient British priesthood has ever been a subject of the highest interest; and its origin, perhaps, may be referred to the most simple cause. Nothing of import was allowed to be written down; nor is there any possible means of knowing

* There can be little doubt that the Druids, Celts, and Cyclops were all of the same origin. The Druids, in fact, were nothing more than the priesthood of that colony of the Celtic race established in Britain. There cannot be a stronger proof of the truth of this assertion, than that all Celtic works, in whatever kingdom they are found, are exactly similar. Dr. Clarke, in his delightful 'Travels,' mentions several antiquities of Celtic date in Sweden and elsewhere, the same in their construction as those found on Dartmoor. He tells us, that old Upsal was the place renowned for the worship of the primeval idolatry of Sweden; that a *circular range of stones* was the spot where its ancient kings went through the ceremony of inauguration. "This curious circle exists in the plains of Mora, hence it is called Morasteen, the word *mora* strictly answering to our word *moor*."—Clarke's Travels, vol. ix., p. 216.

when symbols, or written characters, were first introduced among them. To supply this defect, it became absolutely necessary that the laws, both civil and religious, should be placed in such a form as most readily to be committed to memory, and so transmitted to their posterity. For this purpose no means could be so effective as those of throwing them into the form of apophthegms in verse: the triads are an example.

In process of time, however, what at first was had recourse to as a matter of necessity, became a subject of delight and emulation; and poetry, in all probability, was cultivated for its own sake: for its capability of expressing the passions of the soul, for the beauty of its imagery, and the harmony of its numbers. Those who had most genius would become the best poets; and giving up their time and attention to the art in which they excelled, it is not improbable that they were left to the full exercise of their talent, and became a distinct, and at last a secondary, order of the Druids: those graver personages, who did not thus excel in verse, retaining and appropriating to themselves the higher order of the priesthood,—that of performing the rites and ceremonies of religion, sitting in judgment on the criminal, and acting the part both of priests and kings: for certain it is that though the regal title was still retained by the princes of the Celtæ, all real power was soon usurped by the priests; and it is not a little remarkable that, both in ancient and modern times, this tendency to encroachment on the part of the priesthood has always been observable in those who were followers of a false or corrupted religion. Where God, on the contrary, prevails in

all the purity of his worship, where he says to his chosen servants "these shall be my ministers," respect, submission, and a willing obedience to civil government, for conscience' sake, invariably accompanies the holy function and its order. But idolatry, in ancient times, among the heathen Celtæ,—in modern, under the popes,—constantly produced a tendency to a quite opposite spirit: kings there might be, so long as they were secondary; but the priesthood, we too often find, were struggling for power, and under the Roman pontiffs, as well as under the druids, were frequently found usurping and dispensing it with the most arbitrary rule.

To return from this digression to the bards: and as I am writing from the very land they once inhabited, and to the bard who, in our own times, so deservedly wears the laurel of England, I feel a more than ordinary interest in my subject, which I trust will plead my apology if I somewhat dwell upon it.

Supposing, then, that at first there was but *one* order of the Druidical priesthood, (and I have found nothing to contradict this supposition, which seems most natural,) and that in such order some of the members excelled others in the readiness of throwing into verse the laws and customs of their religion and government, and that this talent at length was their sole occupation, till they became, in some measure, secularized priests, it would naturally follow that in process of time the Druids absolutely divided and separated themselves into *two* orders, priests, and bards. And, amongst the latter, another division soon, perhaps, arose; for some of these excelled in composing the verses connected with the religion and rites of the sacred festivals, whilst others pro-

bably took more delight in celebrating the actions of chiefs and kings, and in singing the fame of their heroes who had fallen in battle. Hence came the *third* order. Those who celebrated the praises of the gods, of course, stood higher, in a land of superstition, than those who merely sung the praises of men. The former, therefore, were called hymn-makers, or vates; and the latter, bards. So great was the power of this priesthood, whether wholly or separately considered, that its members not only exercised all rites of a sacred nature, but determined upon and excited war,—interfered to command peace,—framed the laws and judged the criminal; and also held within their hands the most useful as well as the most delusive arts of life. They cured the sick,—foretold the events of futurity,—held commerce with invisible spirits,—exercised augury and divination,—knew all the stars of Heaven and the productions of the earth, and were supreme in all controversies of a public or of a private nature; whilst their wrath against those who displeased them vented itself in their terrific sentence of excommunication,—a religious sentence which has scarcely a parallel in history, if we except that of excommunication as it was once enforced by the tyrannic church of Rome.

In the sacred groves, the disciples learnt the fearful rites of human immolation to the deified objects of human craft; and, mingling in their study of poetry the beauty and innocence of fiction with some of its worst features, they also made hymns in praise of the seasons, of the birds and the plants, and celebrated the seed-time, and the “golden harvest,” in the numbers of their verse. Here, likewise, they

learnt to frame those war-songs of impassioned eloquence, which depicted the hero in such glowing colours, that they who listened caught the inspiration and rose to emulate his deeds; and their kings and chiefs were sent forth to the battle "with a soul returned from song more terrible to the war."

The refinements of polished life and education were not theirs; but their imagination, unfettered by rules, and impressed from infancy by the wild grandeur of the scenes in which they lived, was strong and bold as the martial spirit of their race. Those arts which teach men to subdue or to hide their feelings were unknown; and, following the impulse of nature, they became masters in the true eloquence of the heart. Hence arose the power of the bards, in whose very name there is so much of poetry, that, in our own language, we could find no other term so suited to express the feathered songsters of the air, and, therefore, were they called "*the bards of the woods*."

The power of oratory was eminently displayed in all their compositions; and so highly was that art esteemed by the Druids of the Celtæ, that it gave birth to the beautiful allegory told by Lucian, who says that, whilst he was in Gaul, he saw Hercules represented as a little old man, who was called by the people "*Ogmios*;" and that this feeble and aged deity appeared in a temple dedicated to his worship, drawing towards him a multitude who were held by the slightest chain fastened to their ears and to his tongue. Lucian, wondering what so strange

* Most of the peasantry in Devonshire still pronounce this word (birds) *bards*.

a symbol was intended to denote, begged that it might be explained to him; when he was presently told, "that Hercules did not in Gaul, as in Greece, betoken strength of body, but, what was of far greater power, the force of eloquence; and thus, therefore, was he figured by the priests of Gaul." Lord Bacon possibly might have had this image in his mind when he so emphatically declared that "knowledge is power."

All the Celtic tribes appear to have studied these arts with extraordinary success. The Germans, as well as the Gauls and Britons, did so; for "they abound," says Tacitus, "with rude strains of verse, the reciters of which are called bards; and with this barbarous poetry they inflame their minds with ardour in the day of action, and prognosticate the event from the impression which it happens to make on the minds of the soldiers, who grow terrible to the enemy, or despair of success, as the war-song produces an animated or a feeble sound."

The genius for poetry evinced by their bards was one of the most remarkable qualities observable among the ancient priesthood of Britain: so simple, yet so forcible, was the imagery they employed,—so feeling the language of their productions,—that, even at this day, such of their poems as have come down to us can never be read with other than the deepest interest by those in whose bosom there is a responsive chord, true to nature and to feeling. The passions they expressed in these poems were rude but manly; their indignation was aimed against their foes,—against cowardice and treachery; whilst the virtues of courage,—of generosity,—of tenderness,—of the "liberal heart" and "open hand,"

were honoured and praised by the Sons of Song ; and the brave man went forth to battle, strong in the assurance that, if he conquered or if he fell, his fame would be held sacred, and receive its honours from the harp of truth.

The learning of the British priesthood has been frequently spoken of by ancient authors in terms of commendation ; and in this particular they have been ranked with the nations of the East. Pliny compares them to the magi of Persia, and says they were the physicians as well as the poets of the country. Cæsar observes that they had formed systems of astronomy and natural philosophy. Twenty years of study was the allotted time for rendering a novice competent to take upon him the sacred order ; and, when initiated, the education of the sons of the British nobles and kings, the mysteries of religion, legislation, and the practice of the various arts that were exclusively theirs, must have afforded ample scope for the constant exercise of that learning which had been acquired with so much diligence and labour.

That they exercised their genius, also, on matters of speculative philosophy, cannot be doubted ; since Strabo has recorded one of their remarkable opinions respecting the universe ;—" that it was never to be destroyed, but to undergo various changes, sometimes by the power of fire, at others by that of water." And Cæsar mentions their disquisitions on the nature of the planets, " and of God, in the power he exercised in the works of his creation." Many opinions, purely speculative, have been broached to account for the choice of a circular figure in their temples. Some have supposed it was de-

signed to represent that eternity which has neither a beginning nor an end. But it is not improbable that, as they taught the multitude to worship visible objects, the form of their temples might have had a reference to those objects; and the planets they so much studied (the sun and moon, in particular, as the chief amongst their visible deities) might have suggested an imitation of their form in the circular shape of the temples dedicated to their worship.

The use of letters was not unknown to the Druids of Britain; for Cæsar states “that in all affairs and transactions, excepting those of religion and learning,” (both of which belonged to the mysteries of Druidism,) “they made use of letters, and that the letters which they used were those of the Greek alphabet*.” There was no want, therefore, of that learning which is requisite for the purposes of history, had they chosen to leave a written record of the public transactions of their country. But in these early times the poet was the only historian; and his verses were committed to memory, and were thus handed down from age to age. The laws were framed and preserved by the same means; so that,

* The Rev. Edward Davies, in his most interesting account of the Lots and the Sprig Alphabet of the Druids, has very satisfactorily shown that many antiquaries, by an inattentive reading of a particular passage in Cæsar, adopted the erroneous notion that the British priests allowed nothing to be written down; whereas, Cæsar only states that they allowed their *scholars* to commit nothing to writing. The symbols, or sprigs, chosen from different trees, gave rise to the sprig alphabet of Ireland; and Toland, in his very learned work on the Druids of that country, has established the fact of their having some permanent records, by a reference to the stone memorials of Ireland, which in his day, about a century ago, still bore the vestiges of Druidical inscriptions.

in those days, what are now the two most opposite things in the literature of modern nations,—law and poetry,—went hand in hand; and the lawyers of the ancient Britons were unquestionably the wearers of the long blue robes instead of the black ones*.

It was, indeed, a favourite practice with the nations of antiquity to transmit their laws from generation to generation merely by tradition. The ancient Greeks did so; and the Spartans, in particular, allowed none to be written down. The Celtæ observed the same custom; and Toland mentions that, in his time, there was a vestige of it still to be found in the Isle of Man, where many of the laws were traditionary, and were there known by the name of *Breast Laws*. When speaking of the jurisprudence of these primitive nations, Tacitus gives a very striking reason for the administration of the laws being confined to the priesthood. “The power of punishing,” says that delightful historian, “is in no other hands: when exercised by the priests, it has neither the air of vindictive justice nor of military execution;—it is rather a *religious sentence*.” * * “And all the people,” says Strabo, “entertain the highest opinion of the justice of the Druids: to them all judgment, in public and private—in civil and criminal cases, is committed.”

We learn, also, from the classical writers, that the Druids had schools or societies in which they taught

* In the ‘Triads,’ the bards are described as wearers of this particular dress, which no doubt was adopted to distinguish them from the white-robed Druids: “Whilst Menu lived, the memorial of bards was in request; whilst he lived the sovereign of the land of heroes, it was his custom to bestow benefits and honour and fleet coursers on the wearers of the *long blue robes*.”

their mysteries, both civil and religious, to their disciples;—that such seats of learning were situated in forests and groves remote from, or difficult of, general access; since secrecy and mystery were the first rules of their instructions. Had they taught only truth, neither the one nor the other would have been required; since it is only falsehood that seeks a veil, and when that is once lifted, she is sure to be detected. False religions, or those corrupted by the inventions of men, have always observed the same kind of mysticism, not only in rude but in polished ages also. No one was suffered to lift the sacred mantle of the goddess Hertha, except the priest: the people were charged to believe in her most terrific superstitions, but none could see her and live*. The popes insisted on the same kind of discipline: their own infallibility was the chief point of faith; but no layman was to open that sacred book in which it could not be found.

To enlarge on the frauds, the arts of magic, soothsaying and divination, practised by the Druids to blind and lead the multitude, would extend much beyond the proposed limits of this letter. Should it never go farther than Keswick, all that I have said respecting the ancient priesthood I know would be unnecessary. But should these papers so far meet your approval as to sanction their hereafter appearing in print, I must consider what might be useful to the mere general reader; and it is possible that some one of that class may not have troubled himself much about the early history of that extraordinary priesthood who once held a power so truly

* See 'Manners of the Germans.' Murphy's Tacitus, page 351.

regal in the islands of Great Britain. To such readers, this sketch, slight as it is, may not be unacceptable, should it only excite in them a wish to consult better authorities; and I trust, also, it may serve the chief purpose which I now have in view—namely, that of raising some degree of interest, by speaking of the Druids, to lead them, should they have the opportunity, to an examination of those ancient vestiges and structures that still remain on the wilds of Dartmoor. Of these I shall speak in the subsequent letters; and in doing so I shall endeavour to execute my task with fidelity, since not the least motive in prompting me to it is the wish I entertain to throw some light on a subject that has hitherto been involved in much obscurity; and even my labours, like those of the “little busy bee,” may bring something to the hive, though they are gathered from the simplest sources around me.

I may also add, that in pointing out to this neighbourhood in particular the connexion that really exists between the remains of British antiquity (so widely scattered on the moor) and the early history and manners of the first inhabitants of their country, it is to be hoped that a sufficient interest may be excited in favour of those vestiges, to check the unfeeling spoliation which has of late been so rapidly carried on. When we find on Dartmoor masses of granite, buried under the earth and resting upon its surface,—here lying close to the road, and there impeding the culture of its soil—surely it would be better to serve the purposes of commerce from sources like these, than to despoil (as they are now doing) the summits of its eminences,—of those very tors that give beauty and majesty to the desolation

of the moor. The cairns,—the obelisks,—the circles, and the poor remains of British huts, might be permitted to last out their day, and to suffer from no other assaults than those which are inevitable—time and tempest; and these are enemies that will not pass over them in vain.

Dartmoor has, indeed, been a field to the spoiler; and many of its most interesting memorials have been destroyed within the last twenty or thirty years: for during those periods, vast walls of stones, piled loosely together without cement, and extending, in every direction, for many miles, have been placed up as boundaries or enclosures for cattle. This great demand for stones caused the workmen to remove those which lay, as it were, ready to their hand; you may judge, therefore, what havoc it made with the circles, cairns, and cromlechs. Others—such as were straight and tall—have been carried off (so the people of the moor tell me) to make rubbing-posts for cattle, a rubbing-post being sometimes called “cows’ comfort” in Devon.

One assault on the antiquities of Dartmoor was so atrocious that it must not here be passed in silence. Many years ago, a young man of this place celebrated his freedom from his apprenticeship by leading out a parcel of young fellows, as wanton and as silly as himself, to Dartmoor, for no other purpose than that of giving themselves the trouble to do what they could in destroying its antiquities. As if, like the ancient inhabitants of the moor, they had been worshippers of the god Hu,—the Bacchus of the Druids,—they commenced the day with a libation, for they made punch in the rock-basins, and roared and sung as madly as any of the old devotees

might have done during the riots of a saturnalia in honour of Hu himself in the days of his pride. This rite accomplished, and what small remains of wit they might have had being fairly driven out by these potent libations, they were ungrateful enough to commence their havoc by destroying the very punch-bowl which had served them, and soon set about the rest of their work. They were a strong and a willing band; so that logans were overturned, obelisks knocked down, and stones rooted from their circles, till, work as hard as they would, they found the Druids had been too good architects to have their labours shaken and upset in a day. They left off at last for very weariness, having accomplished just sufficient mischief to furnish the moralizing antiquary who wanders over Dartmoor with the reflection their wanton havoc suggests to his mind,—that wisdom builds not without time and labour; but that folly overturns in a day that which it could not have produced in an age—so much easier is it at all times to effect evil than to do good*.

Allow me the honour to remain,

My dear Sir,

Ever truly and faithfully yours,

A. E. BRAY.

* I am the more induced to dwell on this circumstance, since, even in our own day, a naval officer overturned the celebrated logan in Cornwall; and, much to the credit of government, was compelled to set it up again, which he effected with extreme difficulty.

LETTER IV.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Subject continued—Dartmoor, a region fitted by nature for the rites of Druidism—Tors retain their British names—Hessory-tor, Bel-tor, Mis-tor, Ham-tor, noticed by Borlase—Bair (or Baird) Down—Wistman's Wood—Secrecy and mystery observed by the Druids in their societies—Solitary places and deep groves—Antique Forest; its only vestige—Trunks of trees found in bogs and below the surface—Birds sacred to British superstition still seen on the Moor—Black Eagle once found there—Story of the white-breasted Bird of Oxenham—Heath Polt, or Moor Blackbird—Birds in flocks—Dartmoor probably the largest station of Druidism in Britain—Reasons assigned as the probable causes wherefore the Druidical Remains on the Moor are of less magnitude than those of other and more celebrated stations—Circles on the Moor; memorials of consecration of the Tors—Architects of Egypt; level country—Vixen Tor compared to the Sphinx; rock-basins on its top—Lines from Carrington—Morning on the Moor—Herds of Cattle, &c.—Extraordinary Feat of a Dartmoor Pony—Insect world—Cuckoo lambs—Birds of the Moor, rare and common, briefly noticed.

Vicarage, Tavistock, Devon, Feb. 25, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

THE earliest records respecting the history of Dartmoor must be sought on the moor itself, and that with no small diligence and labour. And as I presume no reasonable person would deny that the Damnonii, as indeed all the other inhabitants of Britain, upheld the priesthood of Druidism, I shall proceed to show that, throughout the whole county, no place was so fitted to the august rites of their superstition, to the solemn courts of their judicature,

or to the mystery and retirement which they sought in the initiation of their disciples, as amid the rugged and rock-crowned hills of Dartmoor.

We know that the Druids not only held it unlawful to perform the rites of their religion within covered temples, but that they preferred, whenever they could be found, eminences and lofty heights for that purpose; as such situations gave them a more open and commanding view of those planets which they studied as philosophers and worshipped as idolaters.

Dartmoor abounds in heights that, in some instances, assume even a mountainous character; and when we find that many of these retain to the present hour the very names of those false gods (though corrupted in their pronunciation, as are the names of towns and villages, by the lapse of years and the changes in language) to whom altars were raised by the priesthood of Britain, surely this circumstance *alone* becomes a strong presumptive evidence that the moor itself was a chosen spot for the ancient and idolatrous worship of the Damnonii. I shall here give a few of the most prominent examples; and it is not unlikely that any one learned in the old British tongues—the Cornish or Welsh—would be able to find a significant meaning in the names of various other heights and tors on the moor, that now sound so strange and whimsical to unlearned ears like my own.

The Britons worshipped the Almighty, or, as he was not unfrequently called, the God of Battles, under the name of Hesus. On Dartmoor we find a height called *Hessory-tor*. The sun, that universal object of adoration even from the earliest times with

heathen nations, was also held sacred by the Druids, and the noblest altars and temples were dedicated to his honour. The sun was adored under various names, but none more commonly than that of Belus, or Bel*; and on Dartmoor we have *Bel-tor* to this day. The sun, and also the moon, were sometimes worshipped under the names of Mithra or *Misor*: on the moor we have *Mis-tor*, a height on whose consecrated rocks there is found so large and perfect a rock-basin as to be called by the peasantry *Mis-tor Pan*. Ham, or Ammon, was ranked amongst the British deities: on Dartmoor the heathen god still possesses his eminence, unchanged in name, as we there find *Ham-tor* to this day; and my venerable and learned friend, the Rev. Mr. Polwhele, in his 'History of Devon,' refers to the worship of that deity all the numerous *Hams* of this county†. We have also a spot which you as a poet must visit,—*Baird-down* (pronounced Bair-down), which Mr. Bray conjectures to mean the hill of bards; and, opposite to it, Wistman's, or (as he also conjectures) *Wiseman's Wood*, of which I shall presently speak in a very particular manner, as embracing some of the most remarkable points of Druid antiquity to be found throughout the whole range of the moor.

We learn from Cæsar, and other classical writers, that the Druids lived in societies and formed schools,

* Borlase notices these tors on Dartmoor as still bearing the names of Druid gods.

† According to Kennet's 'Glossary,' however, *Hamma* is from the Saxon *Ham*, a house; hence *Hamlet*, a collection of houses. It sometimes meant an enclosure; hence to *hem* or surround. This is the sense in which it seems chiefly used in Devonshire, as the South-hams, &c.

in which they taught the mysteries of their learning, their religion, and their arts. We find, also, that such seats of instruction were situated in forests and groves, remote from or difficult of general access; since secrecy and mystery accompanied all they taught. Where, therefore, could the priesthood of the Damnonii have found, throughout the whole of the west, a place more suited to these purposes than Dartmoor?

It was a region possessed of every natural advantage that could be desired in such an age and by such a people. It was surrounded and girded by barrier rocks, hills and eminences, mountainous in their character. No enemy could approach it with any hostile intent, without having to encounter difficulties of an almost insurmountable nature; and such an approach would have been announced by the flaming beacons of the hundred tors, that would have alarmed and called up the country to prepare for defence in every direction.

Though Dartmoor is now desolate, and where the oak once grew there is seen but the lonely thistle, and the "feebly-whistling grass," and its hills are the hills of storms, as the torrents rush down their sides, yet that it was once, in part at least, richly clothed with wood cannot be doubted. The very name, so ancient, which it still bears, speaks its original claim to a sylvan character—the *Forest* of Dartmoor*; and though of this antique forest nothing now remains but the wasting remnant of its days, in the "lonely wood of Wistman," (as Car-

* *Foresta q. d. Feresta*, hoc est ferarum statio. Vide Du Cange in voce, who defines it also *Saltus*, *Silva*, *Nemus*, evidently inclining to the opinion that it should be a woody tract.

rington has designated it,) to show where the groves of the wise men, or Druids once stood, yet evidence is not wanting to prove what it has been : since in bogs and marshes on the moor, near the banks of rivers and streams, sometimes imbedded twenty feet below the surface of the earth, are found immense trunks of the oak and other trees*.

These rivers and streams, which everywhere abound on the moor, afforded the purest waters; and many a beautiful and bubbling fountain, which sprang from the bosom of that earth, once worshipped as a deity by the Celtic priesthood, (and to whom they ascribed the origin of man) became, no doubt, consecrated to the mysteries of her circle and her rites. It is not improbable that one or two springs of this nature, still held in high esteem on the moor, may owe their sacred character to the superstitions of the most remote ages: such, perhaps, may be the origin of that estimation in which Fice's well is still held; but of this more hereafter.

The groves of oak, whose "gloom," to use the language of Tacitus, "filled the mind with awe, and revered at a distance, might never be approached but with the eye of contemplation," were filled with the most varied tribes of feathered inhabitants. Some of these were of an order sacred in the estimation of Druid superstition. The raven was its tenant, whose ill-omened appearance is still considered as the harbinger of death, and still is as much dreaded by the peasantry as it was in the days of ancient augury and divination. The black eagle, that native

* A very large trunk of an oak tree so found on Dartmoor is now preserved in the vicarage gardens of Tavistock.

of the moor, long spread her sable wing, and made her dwelling amidst the heights and the crags of the rocky tors, when she had long been driven from the valleys and the more cultivated lands. She is still said to revisit the moor, like a spirit of other times, who may be supposed to linger around the scenes in which she once proudly held her sway; but her nest is nowhere to be found*. There also the "white-breasted bird of Oxenham†," so fatal to that house, still appears with her bosom pure and unsullied as the Druid's robes, and, like him, raises a cry of augury and evil. Her mission done, she is seen no more till she comes again as a virgin mourner complaining before death. There, too, may be found the heath poult, or moor black-bird, once held sacred: so large is it, and sable in colour, that it might, at a little distance, be mistaken for the black eagle. Her eye, with its lid of the brightest scarlet, still glances on the stranger who ventures on the recesses of the moor; and, like a watchful genius at the fountain, she is chiefly seen to make her haunt near the source of the river Dart.

* "I have been told," says Mr. Polwhele in his 'Devon,' "by a gentleman of Tavistock, that, shooting on Dartmoor, he hath several times seen the black eagle there, though he could never discover its nest."

† "There is a family" (says Prince, speaking of Oxenham, in his 'Worthies of Devon') "of considerable standing of this name at South Tawton, near Oakhampton in this county; of which is this strange and wonderful thing recorded, That at the deaths of any of them, a bird, with a white breast, is seen for a while fluttering about their beds, and then suddenly to vanish away. Mr. James Howell tells us that, in a lapidary's shop in London, he saw a large marble-stone, to be sent into Devonshire, with an inscription, 'That John Oxenham, Mary, his sister, James, his son, and Elizabeth, his mother, had each the appearance of such a bird fluttering about their beds as they were dying.'"

No place could have been better adapted for observing the flight of birds in Druid augury, than the woods and heights of Dartmoor. I have often there seen them in flocks winging their way, at a vast elevation across its hills. Sometimes they would congregate together, and with a sudden clamour that was startling, rush out from the crags and clefts of one of the granite tors, with the utmost velocity. At others, they would pause and rest for a moment among the rocks, or skim along the rivers and foaming streams, and dip their wings and rise again with restless rapidity.

The vast quantity of rock, the masses of granite that are everywhere strewn throughout the moor, the tors that crowned the summits of every hill, must have afforded such facilities for the purpose of their altars, circles, obelisks, cromlechs and logans, that no part of this kingdom had, perhaps, a more celebrated station of Druidism than Dartmoor: not even Mona, Classerness, nor the plains of Abury and Salisbury. But they who, like the Druids themselves, have been accustomed to pay an almost idolatrous worship to that primitive and most noble structure Stonehenge, may here exclaim,—“ If this be true, how is it that you have no such memorial of equal magnitude on Dartmoor ? ”

To this I answer, Stonehenge (like Carnac in Brittany, which I have cursorily visited and described*) stands on a plain: it required, therefore, such a structure to give to the ceremonies of druidical worship that awful and imposing effect which Tacitus so repeatedly implies to have formed the

* In ‘ Letters written during a Tour through Normandy and Brittany in 1818.’

chief character of their religious mysteries. On the plains of Salisbury nature had done nothing for the grandeur of Druidism, and art did all. On Dartmoor the priests of the Britons appropriated the *tors themselves as temples*, erected by the hand of nature, and with such majesty, that their circles were only memorials of their consecration: so that what in level countries became the most imposing object, was here considered as a matter of comparative indifference. In such scenes a Stonehenge would have dwindled in comparison with the granite tors into perfect insignificance; it would have been as a pyramid at the foot of Snowdon. The architects of Egypt, like the Druids of Salisbury Plain, had a level country to contend with, and they gave to it the glory of mountains, as far as art may be said to imitate Nature in the effect of her most stupendous works.

Whoever attentively examines the tors and vestiges of antiquity on Dartmoor will soon be convinced that art was but very slightly employed in the masses of granite which crown the heights that were consecrated to the divinities of British idolatry. In Vixen-tor, that sphinx of the moor, the mass was so completely formed by nature to suit their desires, that three basins, chiselled on the very summit of this lofty and insulated rock, is the only mark left of its having been selected for any one of the numerous rites of Druidical superstition.

On Dartmoor, then, we may fairly conclude that whatever was most advantageous to the hierarchy of the ancient Britons was most amply to be found; and, in my next letter, I shall proceed to a more minute examination of what use was made of such

advantages, by describing what still remains to interest us as records of the being, the history, and the religious rites of the priests of the Damnonii. Nor can I conclude these remarks without observing that, on the moor, the Druid moved in the region of the vast and the sublime: the rocks, the winter torrent, the distant and expanded ocean, the works of the great God of nature, in their simplest and in their most imposing character, were all before his view; and often must he have witnessed, in the strife of elements, that scene so beautifully described by our poet, who has celebrated the moor with a feeling true to nature, and with a boldness and vigour suited to the grandeur of the subject he pourtrayed.

“ Fierce, frequent, sudden is the moorland storm ;
And oft, deep sheltered in the stream-fed vales,
The swain beholds upon the lessening tor
The heavens descend in gloom, till, mass on mass
Accumulated, all the mighty womb
Of vapour bursts tremendous. Loud resounds
The torrent rain, and down the guttered slopes
Rush the resistless waters. Then the leap
Of headlong cataract is heard, and roar
Of rivers struggling o’er their granite beds—
Nor these alone—the giant tempest passed,
A thousand brooks their liquid voices raise
Melodiously, and through the smiling land
Rejoicing roll.”

And here, ere I say farewell, let me pause a moment to express my regret for that indifference with which many persons, in this part of England, look on Dartmoor. Carrington found in it a subject for a poem that has ranked his lamented name amongst the first of our British bards. And though all are not poets, nor have the feelings that are allied to

poetry, yet all might find some pleasure, would they but learn to value it,—a pleasure pure as it is powerful,—in the heights and valleys of the lonely moor.

A morning's walk there, in the spring or the summer, is attended with a freshness, from the bracing temperature of the air, which gives cheerfulness to the mind and content to the heart. A thousand circumstances in Nature everywhere lie around to interest him who would but view her with a kindly and a feeling eye. The mists that hang about the tors are seen gradually dispersing; and the tors themselves, as we watch them, seem to put on a thousand forms, such as fancy suggests to delight the mind in which she dwells. The cattle are seen around, grazing on the verdant pastures, studded with myriad drops of dew. As we look on them, they call to mind some of the bronze works of antiquity that so nobly represented those creatures: for in symmetry of form and limb, as well as in richness of colour, the cattle of Devon are models of beauty in their kind. The wild horses and colts, with their unshorn and flowing tails and manes, recall also to our recollection the forms of antique sculpture. To observe them in action, as they bound, race, or play together, in the very joy of their freedom, affords a spectacle of animal delight that is replete with interest. The horse thus seen in his natural state, before he is ridden by man, becomes a perfect study for a painter, and gives a much finer view of that noble creature than can be witnessed by those who have only seen him trimmed and saddled from a stable*. And the

* The following circumstance, respecting a pony that was one of a

poor ass, that useful and patient drudge,—an animal, excepting the goat, the most picturesque in nature,—is seen quietly browsing on the grass, waiting the hour of labour in the service of his master.

The instinct of the lambs and the care of their mothers have often interested me, as I have observed the perseverance with which one of the latter would range around the flock till she found her own offspring, to give it the earliest meal of her living milk. And the bleating of some other poor little straggler, as it would stand still and call upon its dam, was so like the cry of infancy, that it could not fail to raise a feeling of pity for so helpless and harmless an animal*.

The rivers and streams, as they run in the morning light, have something so exhilarating that it glads the heart and the eye to look on their lively and sparkling waters as they flow,

“ Making sweet music with the enamelled stones.”

And then the fresh air of the moor, which renders the very step light as we inhale it, and the clear blue skies, and the varying and changing clouds,

very fine breed the late Mr. Bray had on the moor, is worth noticing here. It is also mentioned by Mr. Burt in Carrington's Poem. The late Capt. Cotgrave, who was engaged in some duty at the French prison, had seen a pony he wished to detach from the herd at Bair-down. In the endeavour to effect his object, the animal was driven on some blocks of granite by the side of a tor. A horseman instantly rode up in order to catch it, when, to the astonishment of all who witnessed the feat from below, the pony fairly and completely leapt over horse and rider, and escaped with a fleetness that set at defiance all further pursuit.

* Early lambs are never reared on Dartmoor, on account of the coldness of the air. Those that come late, however, are considered to do well there. These are called *cuckoo lambs*, as being contemporary with the appearance of that bird.

now white, now roseate, or opening and closing before the view, are all objects of the highest enjoyment. And the insect world, that starts at once, as it were, into its ephemeral being,—a world of which none in Nature presents a greater variety,—all useful, all governed by a beautiful economy in their order and their kind,—can never be seen with indifference by those who have once given such subjects even but a slight attention. We are pleased to see around us, reviving into life, even our most familiar acquaintance, the common house-fly; and the very insects that love rivers and haunt pools add some degree of animation to the hour. No place will afford a more interesting field for the entomologist than the hills and vales of Dartmoor. There, too, we meet in spring, upon a sunny day, the pale yellow butterfly, usually the tenant of the garden and the flower-bed; and it is often seen, like infancy by the side of age, sporting on the front of some old grey rock, or settling on the wild thyme,—or on the golden furze,—as its wings vibrate with a quickness that will sometimes dazzle the sight.

And how beautiful is “the song of earliest birds,” the thrush that never tires, or the lark that sings first and soars highest, like youth who thinks the world is a region of pleasure to be compassed on the wing of hope. Dartmoor is rich in birds, and those often of an uncommon kind*. The pretty little wheatear, or English ortolan, builds its nest amongst the old rocks, whose colour it so resembles in the black and grey of its wings, that you sometimes do not observe

* Dr. Moore, of Plymouth, has lately published a catalogue of all the birds that frequent the different parts of the county of Devon.

it perched upon the clefts till you hear its small cry. There too has been seen the goshawk, so rare in Devon; and the kite, that is now seldom found in its peaceful and inhabited valleys, still prowls, like a bandit, about the moor, as if he came to make his prey with impunity amidst its unfrequented wilds. And the honey-buzzard, rare as it is in this county, has there, nevertheless, been marked chasing the dragon-fly, as that beautiful insect endeavoured to evade its enemy, and would

“ Dart like a fairy javelin by.”

And the ring-ouzel finds its dwelling in the hollows and cavities of the rocks, and the poor little reed-wren makes them her home; and robin, that favourite of old and young, there need fear no pilfering youngster—since so much is this pretty bird the familiar friend of children in our neighbourhood, that the boys will pelt any one of their companions who may steal but an egg from “poor Cock Robin’s” nest. The snow-buzzard and the stormy petrel are sometimes found on these hills; and even the bit-tern will make her cry amidst its desolation. But these are birds of a melancholy season; since the first we know, by its name, comes in the dreary time, and the petrel, suffering from the storm that gives her a claim upon our commiseration, has been driven to land, and found dead upon the moor.

But in a spring or a summer morning no birds are seen but those which give delight. They are not vain monitors; for all their occupations are divided between rejoicing and industry. They sing in the gladness and thankfulness of their existence, or they labour to find food and shelter for their

young. To them nothing is indifferent within the range of their capacity. The straw or the fallen leaf,—the tuft of wool that hangs on the briar as it was torn from the sheep,—a very hair is treasured and placed to the account of what is useful in the internal structure exhibited by the little architect in its nest.

To watch the economy of birds,—to mark the enjoyment of the animal world,—to view with an eye of interest and contemplation the fields with “verdure clad,” and every opening blossom bursting into beauty and to life, are enjoyments that instruct and delight youth, middle and old age. They supply us with a source of innocent employment, to which none need be dead but those who wilfully become so by keeping their eyes closed before that book of Nature which is everywhere spread around, that we should read in it those characters of an Almighty hand that lead the mind to wonder at and adore his goodness, and the heart to acknowledge and to feel his power, as a Father, who in his “wisdom has created” and preserves them all.

Adieu, my dear Sir ;

And believe me,

With grateful esteem,

Ever most truly yours,

A. E. BRAY.

LETTER V.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Bair-down supposed to have been the Hill of Bards—
Inscriptions on the Rocks: how cut—House on the Eminence—
Beautiful Ravine: Bridge of a lofty single arch over the River
Cowsick—Trees planted in the ravine by the late Mr. Bray—
Remarks on the etymology of Bair-down—and Wistman's Wood
—Observations on the English Distich—Merlin's Cave in the
Rocks—Wand or rod—Rural Inscriptions on the Granite.

Vicarage, Tavistock, March 2, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

HAVING given you, in my former letters, a general account of Dartmoor, I shall now proceed to a more particular description of its localities, and in doing so I shall principally avail myself of the journals of my husband, written at different intervals so far back as the year 1802 down to the present period. I purpose beginning with Bair-down: first, because it was enclosed by the late worthy and respected Mr. Bray, who there built a house, and was fond of retiring to it during the summer and autumn; and secondly, because, as you will presently find, my husband considers Bair-down to have been the hill of bards. In addition to my former allusions on this subject, I may here state, that should it be thought he is incorrect in his view of the *original* claims of the hill to a bardic character, he has now at least fully established them,

by the *inscriptions* on the granite with which he has partly covered several of those enormous masses that arise, with so much magnificence, in the midst of the river Cowsick, that flows at the foot of the eminence on which the house was built by his father.

Some of these inscriptions are now so moss-grown, so hidden with lichen, or so worn with the weather and the winter torrents, that a stranger, unless he examined the rocks at a particular hour of the day when the sun is favourable, would not be very likely to discover them. Others, though composed by him for the same purpose, were never inscribed, on account of the time and labour it required to cut them in the granite. The mode he adopted with those which have been done was as follows: he used to paint the inscriptions himself, in large characters, upon the rocks, and then employ a labourer with what is here called a pick (pick-axe) to work them out. Some of these inscriptions were in triads, and engraved on the rocks in the bardic character of the sprig alphabet, as it is given by the Rev. Edward Davies in his ‘Celtic Remains.’

As a further motive to the task, he wished to indulge his fancy by peopling, as it were, a wilderness, with his favourite authors to enliven its solitude: and when I shall presently tell you the number of poems he wrote at that early period of his life (which, a few only being ever printed, still remain in manuscript) as he delighted to cultivate the poetical visions of a youthful fancy on the moor, you will not wonder that he should have attempted, with somewhat the same sentiments as those so beautifully described by Shak-

speare, to give a tongue to the very rocks, so that there might be found, even in the midst of a desert,

———“ books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

The eminence of Bair-down, on which stands the cottage erected by his late father, is situated about eight miles from Tavistock, near the Moreton road. It is extensive, and to one approaching it from this quarter is seen surrounded on the north and east by lofty tors. In the latter direction it declines gently but deeply, where flows the Dart; whilst the descent is more sudden at the south, and on entering the grounds from the turnpike road, presents itself, most unexpectedly, as a ravine, its sides picturesquely clothed with wood, through which, amid innumerable rocks, rushes the foaming Cowsick. As you continue to advance, the path winds by the side of this ravine, which gradually opens and presents a scene of the most peculiar and romantic kind,—a scene so beautiful that, though I have often viewed it, it always affords me that delight which is generally supposed to be the result of novel impressions. The Cowsick rushes down this ravine, over the noblest masses of granite, broken into a thousand fantastic forms, and scattered in every direction. A picturesque bridge of a single, lofty arch, crosses the river at that spot where the fall is most striking and precipitous: after heavy rains, it there presents a combination of waterfalls that are of the greatest beauty. In the midst of the stream, at some short distance from the bridge, the river branches off in two rocky channels, as it is there interrupted by a little island, on which stands a thick grove of trees. On either side the banks of this

steep ravine are seen a number of trees of various kinds, all in the most flourishing state, on account of their being so sheltered from the bleak winds of the moor.

Such is Bair-down. All the trees were planted by my husband's father, who built the house and the bridge, and who raised the loose stone walls as enclosures for cattle for many miles in extent; and, in short, who literally expended a fortune on the improvements and enclosures on this estate. In the barn behind the cottage, for two years, divine service was performed every Sunday, by one of the Prince of Wales's chaplains, by a dispensation from the Bishop of Exeter. This estate is now let by Mr. Bray to a respectable farmer, named Hannaford (of whom you will hear more in these letters) for a very trifling rent. I now take my leave of you; for all that here follows is from the pen of my husband. The only share I have in it, is that of transcribing it, verbatim, from his old journals. Adieu, therefore, till we meet again.

REMARKS ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF BAIR-DOWN.

RURAL INSCRIPTIONS, &c.

By EDWARD A. BRAY, 1802.

THE most obvious idea as to the origin of this name is, that it either has a reference to Bear, the substantive, or Bare, the adjective. But though a vague rumour, which can hardly be styled tradition, states that it was so called because it was the spot where the *last bear* was destroyed on the moor; I should rather think that some recent poetical spirit has thus given, "to an airy nothing, a local habi-

tation and a name." And the second supposition can hardly be supported, when we come² to consider that this part of the moor, so far from being *bare*, or void of vegetation, is perhaps nearly the best land in the whole of this extensive desert. Rejecting, therefore, those ideas as equally unfounded, we⁴ must derive our information from other sources; and fortunately these sources are immediately at hand. On the opposite side of the river Dart, which bounds my father's property, stands Wistman's wood—the only remaining vestige of the ancient forest. *Wist* is the preterit and participle of *Wis*, from *pyrran*, Saxon, *wissen*, German, to know; and is not at present altogether obsolete, as it is still used in scripture in this sense. From the same etymon comes also *wise*: "sapient; judging rightly; having much knowledge"—(*Johnson's Dict.*) Thus *Wissman's* or *Wistman's Wood* signifies *Silva Sapientium**, the wood of wisemen. The Druids and Bards were unquestionably the philosophers or wisemen of the Britons. We may naturally conjecture, therefore, that this was their principal or their last place of assembly; and the many stone circles on Bairdown immediately opposite the wood confirm the opinion. I am not ignorant that *Wistman's Wood* is sometimes called also *Welchman's Wood*: the one name may easily be the corruption of the other; but if not, and they are distinct appellations, the conclusion will be pretty much the same.

* See Stuart's 'View of Society,' p. 337, to prove that the *Wites* were the same as *Sapientes*; and LL. Anglo-Saxon ap Wilkins there referred to. See also a curious supplication del County de Devonshire to Edward III. Coke's 4. Institute, p. 232. Barons and Autres *Sages*, &c.

When the ancient inhabitants of this country were subjugated by the Romans, some retired into Wales, and others into Cornwall. Cornwall was considered as part of Wales, and, from its form, was called Cornu Walliæ, the horn of Wales. Indeed it is frequently styled West Wales by the British writers. (See 'Rees's Cyclop.') The inhabitants, therefore, of Cornwall, as well as Wales, might be called Welch. And in this supposition I am confirmed by Borlase, who states that the Saxons "imposed the name of *Weales* on the Britons, driven by them west of the rivers Severn and Dee, calling their country, in the Latin tongue, Wallia." It is not improbable that, in the centre of Dartmoor, a colony might still be permitted to exist, either from their insignificance or their insulated situation; and that this colony might be called by the other inhabitants Welchmen, from their resemblance to the inhabitants of Cornwall and Wales.

No colony can be supposed to have existed among the ancient Britons without having their Druids or Wisemen, who, indeed, had the whole of the spiritual, and the greater part of the temporal, power in their hands. Bair-down, then, from its commanding situation, and its gently-ascending acclivities, on which were spread their sacred circles, must, without doubt, have been frequently resorted to by them.

Dun, now altered to down, signifies a hill. We may naturally imagine, therefore, that it was originally called Baird, or Bard-dun, Bardorum-mons, the hill of bards. And the etymology of the word bard will confirm this opinion: it is derived by changing *u* into *b*, which is by no means uncommon,

particularly as the German *w* is pronounced like our *v*, from *waird*, whence comes the modern English *word*. This, like the Greek $\epsilon\pi\omicron\varsigma$, signified not only *verbum*, a word, but *carmen*, a song. The bards then were so called from being singers, or persons who celebrated in songs the achievements of warriors and great men. What, therefore, was originally pronounced Baird-down may easily be supposed, for the sake of euphony, to be reduced to Bair-down.

P.S. On further inquiry I find that some derive bard from *bar*, a fury. The analogy between this and the *furor poeticus* of the Romans must strike every one. The plural in Welch is beirdd. Taliesin is called Pen Beirdd. *i.e.* the Prince of the Bards. Thus Beirdd-dun is literally the hill of the Bards.

The Druids were divided into Vacerri, Beirdd, and Eubages. The second order, or Bards, subsisted for ages after the destruction of the others, and, indeed, were not totally extirpated by the bloody proscription of Edward.

RURAL INSCRIPTIONS ON THE ROCKS OF BAIR-DOWN.

A gentleman, for whose taste and learning I entertain the highest respect, on my submitting "the Inscriptions" to his criticism, communicated to me, in conversation, the following remarks. Not feeling myself sufficiently confident personally to discuss the subject, and convinced that his opinions are entitled to the most mature and serious reflection, I propose at present to state my reasons why I cannot implicitly submit to them. He objected to their being (as

most of them are) in the form of *distichs*, from an idea that it was impossible to condense any really characteristic or poetical thought into *two* lines in the *English* language. This, he said, might possibly be accomplished in *Latin*; but extracts and selections from the best authors of different ages and countries would, he thought, be still better.

Now, in stating the reasons by which I was actuated in the composition of these inscriptions, and in confining myself to their present form, it will be necessary to mention the ideas that suggested themselves to me upon the subject. At first the idea occurred to *me*, as well as to my friend, that nothing more would be required than to select passages from my favourite authors, and I actually laid some Latin and Italian poets under contribution for that very purpose; but I found that the long hexameter lines of Virgil could not easily be brought within the compass of a rude granite stone, where capitals only could be used, and those too of no small dimensions; that many of the most appropriate passages were of some length; and that, were I to have followed the example of Procrustes, however they might still be discovered to be *disjecti membra poëtae*, the sight would have given more disgust than satisfaction to the eye of the spectator. A consideration of no small importance likewise occurred; namely, that though I traced them myself beforehand upon the surface, it was not probable that the person I employed to cut them into the solid granite would be so attentive as not to commit blunders, especially as his labours were only proceeded in during my absence. It was obvious that fewer mistakes would probably occur in English, of which, at any rate, he

may be presumed not to be so entirely ignorant as he certainly is of the former, being only a common mason. In addition to which, inscriptions of this kind have been so frequently repeated that I could not hope to attract attention by any novelty of application. On further reflection, however, I made a great alteration in my original design, and, considering poetical inscriptions as of subordinate consequence, resolved to consecrate particular rocks to particular persons. As the name alone of Theocritus or of Virgil could not fail to communicate to a poetical mind a train of pleasing associations, I did nothing more, at first, than inscribe upon a few rocks "To Theocritus," "To Virgil," &c. This of itself, in so wild and solitary a scene as Dartmoor, was not without its effect: it seemed to people the desert; at any rate one might exclaim, "The hand of man has been here!" I then conceived that it would give more animation to the scene by adding something either addressed to, or supposed to be uttered by, these fancied genii or divinities of the rock; and accordingly, for the sake of conciseness as well as a trial of skill, composed them in couplets. I certainly should have found it much easier to have expanded them into quatrains, or any indefinite number of lines; but I chose to impose this task upon myself for other reasons as well as those above stated, which, however, I cannot help thinking are sufficient.

I entertain a higher opinion of the English language than to think it so deficient in conciseness as to be unable to adapt itself to the form of a distich. I am rather inclined to think that the moral distichs of Cato might be very adequately translated

in the same form. D'Avanzati's translation of Tacitus has acquired great reputation for its conciseness; but, for the sake of curiosity, I have proved that it may be more concisely translated into English than Italian. I may possibly have failed, however, in showing its superior excellence in this particular by my inscriptions, but these I have not the vanity to imagine as just criteria of its powers.

In the island, to which I would appropriate the name of the Isle of Mona, I propose to put none but Druidical inscriptions, principally in the form of triads. These shall be in bardic characters, as they are represented in Davies's 'Celtic Researches.' By way of amusement to those who may wish to decipher them, I shall mark this simple alphabet on a white rod, and call it the *virgula divinatoria*, or the diviner's wand, which is still so celebrated among the miners, so that literally few, if any, will be able to understand it without the assistance of this magic rod. It will add to the effect to call a recess, or kind of grotto, that is contiguous to this island, Merlin's Cave, and on a rock, which may be considered as his tomb, to inscribe—

These mystic letters would you know,
Take Merlin's wand that lies below.

It will be right, perhaps, to have two wands, of equal length; one to be a kind of key to the other; one to be marked with the Bardic letters, and the other at corresponding distances with the English alphabet, thus—

Λ<<VΛC<H<K<X<D<M<Y<T<Y<H<W<Y<.

A B C D E F G H I K L M N O P R S T U V W Y

INSCRIPTION THE FIRST.—*To my Father.*

Still lived the Druids, who the oak revered,
(For many an oak thy peaceful hands have rear'd,)
The hill of Bards had echoed with thy name,
Than warrior deeds more worthy songs of fame.

No. II.

To the Same.

Who gilds the earth with grain can bolder claim
The highest guerdon from the hands of Fame,
Than he who stains the martial field with blood,
And calls from widow'd eyes the bitter flood.

No. III.

To the Same.

This tender sapling, planted now by thee,
Oh ! may it spread a fair umbrageous tree ;
Whilst seated at thy side I tune my lays,
And sing beneath its shade a father's praise.

DRUIDICAL AND OTHER INSCRIPTIONS.

No. I.

Ye Druid train, these sacred rocks revere,
These sacred rocks to minstrel spirits dear !
If pure your lips, if void your breast of sin,
They'll hear your prayers, and answer from within.

No. II.

Read only thou these artless rhymes
Whom Fancy leads to other times ;
Nor think an hour mispent to trace
The customs of a former race :
For know, in every age, that man
Fulfil great Nature's general plan.

No. III.

Oh ! thou imbued with Celtic lore,
Send back thy soul to days of yore,
When kings descended from their thrones
To bow before the sacred stones,
And Druids from the aged oak
The will of Heaven prophetic spoke.

INSCRIPTIONS ON THE ROCKS OF BAIR-DOWN, IN THE RIVER
COWSICK, &c.

To Merlin.

Born of no earthly sire, thy magic wand
Brought Sarum's hanging stones from Erin's land:
To me, weak mortal! no such power is known,
And yet to speak I teach the sacred stone*.

INSCRIPTIONS IN TRIADS, &c.

No. I.

Though worshipp'd oft by many a different name,
God is but one, and ever is the same,
To him at last we go, from whom at first we came.

No. II.

Know, though the body moulder in the tomb,
That body shall the living soul resume,
And share of bliss or woe the just eternal doom.

No. III.

Proud man! consider thou art nought but dust;
To Heaven resign thy will, be good, be just,
And for thy due reward to Heaven with patience trust.

No. IV.

Their earthly baseness to remove,
Souls must repeated changes prove,
Prepared for endless bliss above.

* It is pretended that Merlin was the son of an Incubus and a vestal. He is said, by the power of magic, to have brought from Ireland those immense masses of granite that form Stonehenge, which means, according to some antiquaries, *hanging-stones*; or stones hanged, hung, or connected together; or as the poet says, "poised by magic." The *hinge* of a door may probably be referred to the same origin. Merlin's original name was Ambrosius. It is thought that Amesbury, or Ambresbury, near Stonehenge, took its name from Ambrosius Aurelius, a British Prince. May not the credulous vulgar have confounded him with Merlinus Ambrosius, and thus ascribed this probably Druidical monument to the supernatural powers of this celebrated enchanter?

No. V.

Adore great Hu*, the god of peace;
 Bid war and all its woes to cease;
 So may our flocks and fruits increase.

No. VI.

To Odin† bow with trembling fear,
 The terrible, the God severe:
 Whose bolt, of desolating fire,
 Warns not, but wreaks his vengeful ire;
 Who roars amid the bloody fight;
 Recalls the foot that turns for flight;
 Who bids the victor's banners fly;
 And names the name of those to die.

INSCRIPTIONS TO THE BARDS ALLUDED TO BY GREY.

To Cadwallo.

Mute is thy magic strain,
 "That hush'd the stormy main."

To Hoel.

Thy harp in strains sublime express'd
 The dictates of thy "high-born" breast.

To Urien.

No more, awaken'd from thy "craggy bed,"
 Thy rage-inspiring songs the foe shall dread.

To Llewellyn.

Mid war's sad frowns were smiles oft wont to play
 Whilst pour'd thy harp the "soft," enamour'd "lay."

To Modred.

Thy "magic song," thine incantations dread,
 "Made huge Piinlimmon bow his cloud-topt head."

* Hu Gadran, the peaceful ploughman. One of the names of the deity among the Celtæ.

† Odin, the Deity of the Goths and other Northern nations.

ADDITIONAL TRIADS.

No. I.

From Mela.

Ut forent ad bella meliores ;
 Æternas esse animas,
 Vitamque alteram ad manes.

The soul 's immortal—then be brave,
 Nor seek thy coward life to save ;
 But hail the life beyond the grave.

ANOTHER FROM DIOGENES LAERTIUS.

Σέβειν Θεούς,
 καὶ μηδὲν κακὸν ὀρᾶν,
 καὶ ἀνδρείαν ἄσκειν.

Adore the Gods with daily prayer,
 Each deed of evil shun with care,
 And learn with fortitude to bear.

ALLUDING TO THE DRUIDS' BELIEF IN THE METEMPSYCHOSIS*.

Here all things change to all—what dies,
 Again with varied life shall rise :
 He sole unchanged who rules the skies.

ALLUDING TO THE DRUIDICAL SPRIG ALPHABET.

Hast thou the knowledge of the trees ?
 Press then this spot with votive knees,
 And join the sacred mysteries.

A TRIAD, FOUNDED ON THE MAXIMS OF THE DRUIDS IN RAPIN'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND, vol. i. p. 6, INTRODUCTION.

None must be taught but in the sacred grove :
 All things originate from Heaven above ;
 And man's immortal soul a future state shall prove.

* Cæsar speaking of the Druids (Lib. 6, Sec. 13) says,—In primis hoc volunt persuadere, non interire animas, sed ab alias post mortem transire ad alias : atque hęc maximē ad virtutem excitari putant, metu mortis neglecto.

TO MY FATHER. INSCRIBED ON A ROCK IN THE RIVER COWSICK,
THE BANKS OF WHICH HE HAD PLANTED.

Ye Naiads ! venerate the swain
Who join'd the Dryads to your train.

INSCRIPTION FOR AN ISLAND IN THE RIVER COWSICK, TO WHICH I
HAVE GIVEN THE NAME OF MONA.

Ye tuneful birds ! ye Druids of the grove !
Who sing not strains of blood, but lays of love,
To whom this Isle, a little Mona 's given—
Ne'er from the sacred spot shall *ye* be driven.

INSCRIPTION FOR A ROCK ON THE LOWER ISLAND.

Who love, though e'en through desert wilds they stray,
Find in their hearts companions of the way.

FOR THE SAME ISLAND.

To thee, O Solitude ! we owe
Man's greatest bliss—ourselves to know.

INSCRIPTION ON A ROCK IN THE WOODS NEAR THE COWSICK.

The wretch, to heal his wounded mind,
A friend in solitude will find ;
And when the Blest her influence tries,
He'll learn his blessings more to prize.

FOR A ROCK ON BAIR-DOWN.

Sweet Poesy ! fair Fancy's child !
Thy smiles imparadise the wild.

INSCRIPTION FOR AN ISLAND IN THE COWSICK, TO WHICH I HAVE
GIVEN THE NAME OF VECTIS.

When erst Phœnicians cross'd the trackless main
For Britain's secret shore, in quest of gain,
This desert wild supplied the valued ore,
And Vectis' isle received the treasured store.

FOR A ROCK IN WISTMAN'S WOOD.

The wreck of ages, these rude oaks revere ;
The Druid, Wisdom, sought a refuge here,
When Rome's fell eagles drench'd with blood the ground
And taught her sons her mystic rites profound.

FOR THE SAME.

These rugged rocks, last barrier to the skies,
 Smoked with the Druids' secret sacrifice;
 Alas! blind man, to hope with human blood
 To please a God, all merciful, all good.

INSCRIPTION FOR A ROCK ON BAIR-DOWN.

Mute is the hill of Bards, where erst the choir,
 In solemn cadence, struck the sacred wire:
 Yet oft, methinks, in spells of fancy bound,
 As swells the breeze, I hear their harps resound.

INSCRIPTION NEAR THE ISLAND.

Learning's proud sons! think not the Celtic race,
 Once deem'd so rude, your origin disgrace:
 Know that to them, who counted ages o'er,
 The Greeks and Romans owe their learned lore.
 (Celtic Res: passim.)

INSCRIPTION FOR A ROCK NEAR THE COWSICK.

Here, though now reft of trees, from many an oak
 To Druid ears prophetic spirits spoke;
 And, may I trust the muse's sacred strain,
 Reviving groves shall speak of fate again.

NEAR THE SAME.

Ye minstrel spirits! when I strike the lyre,
 Oh! hover round, and fill me with your fire!

To Boadicea.

Roused by the Druid's songs, mid fields of blood,
 Thine arm the conquerors of the world withstood.

To Caraetacus.

Imperial Rome, that ruled from pole to pole,
 Could never tame, proud chief! thy mighty soul.

To Taliesin.

How boil'd his blood! how thrill'd the warrior's veins!
 When roused to vengeance by thy patriot strains.

To Fingal and his Bards. See Ossian, passim.
 Spirit of Loda*! round their shadowy king,
 Here may the ghosts of song his deeds of glory sing.

To Carril†.
 Mid flowing shells, thy harp of sprightly sound
 Awoke to mirth the festive warriors round.

To Ossian.
 When sings the blast around this mossy stone,
 I see thy passing ghost, I hear thy harp's wild tone.

To Cronnan‡.
 Oft to the warrior's ghost, of mournful tone,
 Thy harp resounded near his mossy stone.

To Ryno§.
 First of his sons of song, thy war-taught string
 Defiance spoke from woody Morven's king.

To Ullin.
 Son of the harp of Fame! thy fateful power
 Could fill with joy the warrior's dying hour.

To Malvina.
 Oft thy white hand the harp of Ossian strung,
 When, hapless sire! thine Oscar's fate he sung ||.

To Minona¶.
 Thy harp's soft sound, thou fair-hair'd maid. was dear,
 More dear thy voice to Selma's royal ear.

* The same as Odin.

† This name imports sprightly and harmonious sound.

‡ This name signifies mournful sound.

§ One of Fingal's principal Bards.

|| Oscar, the son of Ossian, and lover of Malvina, was slain in battle.

¶ This name signifies soft air. Fingal is styled King of Selma as well as of Morven.

To the Cowsick.

To thee, fair Naiad of the crystal flood,
 I offer not the costly victim's blood ;
 But as I quaff thy tide at sultry noon,
 I bless thee for the cool, reviving boon.

To Æsop.

E'en solitude has social charms for thee,
 Who talk'st with beast, or fish, or bird, or tree.

To Thomson.

To Nature's votaries shall thy name be dear,
 Long as the Seasons lead the changeful year.

To Shakspeare.

To thee, blest Bard ! man's veriest heart was known,
 Whate'er his lot—a cottage or a throne.

To Southey, for a rock in Wistman's Wood.

Free as thy Madoc mid the western waves,
 Here refuged Britons swore they'd ne'er be slaves.

To Savage.

What ! though thy mother could her son disown,
 The pitying Muses nursed thee as their own*.

To Spenser.

The shepherd, taught by thine instructive rhyme,
 Learns from thy calendar to husband time.

To Shenstone.

Nurtured by taste, thy lyre by Nature strung,
 Thy hands created what thy fancy sung.

To Browne.

I bless thee that our native Tavy's praise
 Thou'st woven mid Britannia's pastoral lays.

* See Johnson's 'Life of Savage,' and his poem of the 'Bastard.'

To Burns.

Long as the moon shall shed her sacred light,
Thy strains, sweet Bard ! shall cheer the Cotter's night

To Collins.

In *orient* climes let lawless passions rove,
Blest be these plains with friendship and with love.

To Bacon.

Thy prayers induced Philosophy on earth
To call the sciences and arts to birth.

To Walton.

The angler's art who from thy converse learns,
Happier and better to his home returns.

To Falconer.

Oft shall the rustic shed a feeling tear,
The shipwreck'd sailor's piteous tale to hear.

To Dante.

To Faith, not Purgatory, know, 'tis given,
To shut the gates of hell, and ope the gates of Heaven.

To Rowe.

Oh turn, ye fair, from flattery's voice your ear,
Nor live to shed the penitential tear.

To Mathias.

On Thames' loved banks thou strik'st th' Ausonian lyre,
And call'st from Arno's waves the minstrel choir.

To Watts.

The pious rustic from thy sacred lays
May learn to sing the heavenly shepherd's praise.

To Rochester.

Dearer than self was *nothing* to thy breast—
Now, since thou'rt *nothing*, sure thou'rt doubly blest *.

To Aikin.

Nature's free gifts thou taught'st th' admiring swains †,
To calendar, and praise with grateful strains.

To Scott.

Cease not thy strains ; from dawn till close of day,
I'd list, sweet minstrel ! to thy latest lay.

To Wieland.

Thy magic wand, by *Oberon's* fairy power
Mid barren wilds can weave love's roseate bower.

To Varro.

Thy patriot virtue taught the happier son
To turn the soil his father's falchion won ‡.

To Chaucer.

Rude though thy verse, discordant though thy lyre,
Each British minstrel owns thee for his sire.

To La Fontaine.

He taught the beasts that roam the plains
To speak a moral to the swains.

To Cowley.

Oft mid such scenes the livelong day
"The melancholy Cowley" lay.

To Young.

Oh ! lead my thoughts to Him, the source of light,
Ere sleep enchains them in the cave of night.

* Dr. Johnson considers Rochester's poem on *Nothing* his best composition.

† See Dr. Aikin's 'Calendar of Nature.'

‡ Varro wrote on Husbandry.

To Parnell.

Oh ! be it mine with men to dwell,
But oft to seek the hermit's cell.

To Gray.

The youthful swain, where his " forefathers sleep,"
Shall sing thine elegy, sweet Bard ! and weep.

To Rogers.

To every swain grown grey with years
Memory his native vale endears.

To Akenside.*

Imagination's airy dream
Finds *Naiads* in each purling stream.

To Anne Radcliffe.

Nature, enthusiast nymph ! a child
Found thee, and nursed thee in the wild.

I have now, my dear Sir, given you a very numerous collection of Mr. Bray's inscriptions for the rocks of Bair-down and the river Cowsick; yet, numerous as they are, there remain not less than 115 in distichs, which I have *not* sent, because they would have been too many for insertion in these letters. In the next, I purpose taking you to Wistman's Wood, where I trust you will find some objects worthy your attention; till then,

Allow me the honour to remain, &c.

A. E. B.

* Alluding to his 'Pleasures of Imagination,' and his 'Hymn to the Naiads.'

LETTER VI.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Wistman's Wood—Considered as the posterity of a Druid grove—The antiquity of such groves, as places of resort of Eastern idolaters—Examples found in the Bible quoted—Customs of the ancient idolaters—Horses devoted by them to the Sun—Customs of the ancient Germans and Gauls in their Superstitions—Celtic priesthood—Record preserved in the Office of the Duchy of Cornwall respecting Wistman's Wood—The subject of its high antiquity further considered—Hill of Bards, and Wood of the Wisemen contiguous—Account of the Wood, and its localities in their present state—Progress towards it—Adders plentiful on the Moor—Superstition respecting them—How to charm them—Ashen wand—Serpent's egg—Diviner's rod—Pliny's notice of the magic of Britain—Taliesin's account of the wand—The Caduceus, its origin—Toland's account of ancient amulets—Custom of charming adders: a vestige of British superstition—Spring of water—Lucan's notice of Cæsar on entering a Druid grove—Lines on Wistman's Wood—The Farmer's legend about the old grove—The ascent to it—Masses of granite—The extraordinary oaks of Wistman's Wood described—Isabella de Fortibus by some said to have planted the Wood—Ages of trees, &c.—Silver coins found; and human hair in a kairn on the Moor—British monuments destroyed—Crockernton—Circles of stone numerous—Wistman's Wood probably the last retreat of the Druids and Bards of Damnonia.

Vicarage, Tavistock, March 6, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I now take up my pen to give you some account of Wistman's Wood, which, if you will allow the expression, we have always considered as the *posterity* of a Druid grove; and I cannot help thinking that when I shall have stated the various circumstances which induce us to come to this con-

clusion, you will admit it is not wholly without probability or reason.

Every one at all conversant with history is aware that no community of the British priesthood was without its sacred grove, a custom derived from the most remote countries and ages, for the Bible informs us that such groves were the resort of Eastern idolatry in its most fearful rites, and that such were generally found on eminences or "high places." We read in the Second Book of Kings, that when "the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, they built them high places in all their cities," they "set them up images and groves on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burnt incense in all the high places." And again we find these corrupt Israelites "left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of Heaven, and served Baal."

The Druid priesthood did the same in after ages ; and their groves, their altars and "high places," are still remaining, though in the last vestige of their decay, as witnesses of their idolatry, in the extensive wilderness of Dartmoor. How striking a resemblance does the following passage of scripture bear to the superstitions and practices of Celtic nations ! Speaking of Ahab, it is recorded that "he reared altars for Baal, and made a grove ; and worshipped all the host of Heaven and served them ;" and that "he made his son pass through fire, and observed times and used enchantments with familiar spirits and wizards." And when Josiah conquered these infidels, it is written that he destroyed the "groves and vessels made for Baal,—for the sun, the moon,

and the planets, and put down the idolatrous priests who had burnt the incense to them on high places;" and that "he defiled Tophet, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Moloch." And he "took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun*." How much does this superstition (of the horses given to Baal, or Bel, the God of the Sun,) agree with a passage in Tacitus, where, speaking of the manners of the ancient Germans, he says, "a number of milk-white steeds, unprofaned by mortal labour, are constantly maintained at the public expense, and placed to pasture in the religious groves! When occasion requires, they are harnessed to a sacred chariot; and the priest, accompanied by the king, or chief of the state, attends to watch the motions and the neighings of the horses. No other mode of augury is received with such implicit faith by the people, the nobility, and the priesthood. The horses, upon these solemn occasions, are supposed to be the organs of the Gods, and the priests their favoured interpreters."

Cæsar and Diodorus both speak of the Druid groves of superstition; and Tacitus does the same in regard to the Germans, who, as well as the Gauls and Britons, were followers of the Celtic idolatry. "Their deities," says that admirable historian, "are not immured in temples, nor represented under any kind of resemblance to the human form. To do either were, in their opinion, to derogate from the

* In the same chapter we read, that Josiah "slew all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burnt men's bones upon them."

majesty of supreme beings. Woods and groves are the sacred depositaries, and the spots consecrated to their pious uses: they give to that sacred recess the name of the divinity that fills the place." So numerous are the allusions of the classical writers to the groves of Druidism, that it is not necessary to recite examples; since no fact is more clearly established than that no society of the Celtic priesthood was without its grove, for the purposes of instruction, retirement, augury, and numerous other religious rites. The custom of cutting the mistletoe from the oaks of these sanctuaries is too generally known to need any particular notice; since the commonly-received idea of a Druid, with those who scarcely read at all, presents itself to the mind under the figure of an old man with a long beard, who cuts mistletoe from the oaks with a golden hook.

In order to ascertain how far the conjecture is founded on probability that Wistman's Wood, on Dartmoor, is the posterity of a Druid grove, we must consider its known antiquity*—its localities—the extraordinary appearance and actual state of the dwarf and venerable trees, that still flourish in decay amidst the rudest storms, and in one of the rudest spots throughout the whole of the moor;—the probable age of these oaks, and how far one tree would be likely to succeed another;—and though last, not

* In the office of the Duchy of Cornwall there is preserved a Perambulation of the Moor, of very high antiquity, by which it appears that Wistman's Wood was nearly in the same state as at present at the time of the Norman Conquest. This is a very curious fact, and it should be borne in mind by the reader, as it goes far to establish the opinion the writer has ventured to give on this most interesting vestige of the forest.

least, their relative situation with the other British antiquities, by which they are in fact surrounded, and that close at hand. Mr. Bray's derivation of the name of Wistman's Wood, given in the last letter, must also be borne in mind; since this most curious antiquity in the vegetable world is very near Bair-down: so that if he is right in his derivation in both instances, the hill of Bards, and the wood of the Wisemen, or Druids, were contiguous.

Wistman's Wood, then, lies on the side of a steep hill, opposite Bair-down; at its base runs the western branch of the river Dart. Let me fancy for a moment that you are with us—(a dream I one day hope to see realized)—join our excursion, and, whilst attempting to visit this eminence, are helping me along from Bair-down; a friendly arm being a very necessary support to a female who ventures on the expedition; which to one like myself, not overburdened with strength or health, is a task of no small labour, though replete with interest.

The farmer, Hannaford, is our guide; and after having passed up and down hill, and over one of the boundary-walls, or enclosures, some of the stones of which he removes (and builds up again) to afford us an easier way of clambering over it, we have managed, by jumping from rock to rock, in part to ford the river Dart, the waters not being so high as to prevent our doing so, till at length we come to one place so puzzling—so difficult—that our Herculean guide can see no other way of getting me over but that of taking me up, and putting me across with as much ease and good will as Gulliver would have displayed in assisting the Queen of Lilliput in crossing a puddle. At last we are landed on the

opposite bank, and there lies Wistman's Wood, rocks and all, before us;—an inviting object to curiosity and speculation with those who love to indulge in visions of the “olden time.”

The summit of the eminence cannot be seen, on account of its steep ascent; and huge piles, mass on mass of granite blocks seem to rise and grow before us as we pace upwards towards the wood. Every step requires wary walking, since to stumble amidst such rocks, holes, and hollows might be attended with an accident that would prevent all further investigation; and the farmer says, “’Tis a wisht old place, sure enough, and full of adders as can be.” This last communication somewhat cools my enthusiasm about Druid groves; but the farmer offers and supplies a speedy remedy,—one, too, of most mystical origin, and not a little heathenish, being derived from the very Druids upon whose haunts we are about to intrude; for he transfers to my hand the ashen bough or sprig that he was carrying in his own, and initiates me, on the spot, into the pagan rites of charming adders, to render them harmless as the poorest worm that crawls upon the earth. He tells me, that the moment I see an adder I have nothing to do but to draw a circle with an ash rod round it, and that the creature will never go out of it; nay, if a fire were kindled in the ring, it would rather go into the fire itself than pass the circle. He believed, also, that an animal bitten by this venomous reptile may be cured by having a kind of collar woven of ash-twigs suspended round his neck. He likewise mentions having, a year or two ago, killed a very large adder that had been

tamed by the above charm, when he took fifteen young ones from its belly.

To return to our expedition: these superstitions (as we pause a moment to take breath before we continue the rough ascent) become the subject of our conversation; and we cannot help remarking how appropriate they are to the place of Druid antiquity, since the one may be traced to the serpent's egg, and the other, very probably, to the *virga divinatoria*, or diviner's rod. Indeed all magicians and sorcerers are described, from the earliest ages, as being armed with a wand or rod: we read of this, too, in the Bible, where the rods of the magicians were turned into serpents, and the rod of Moses, so transformed, swallowed them up. That the Druids professed magical arts cannot be doubted, since Pliny calls that priesthood "the magi of the Gauls and Britons;" and of this island he says, "Magic is now so much practised in Britain, and with so many similar rites, that we cannot but come to the conclusion, that they immediately derived it from the magi of the Persians." The bard Taliesin thus speaks of the magic wand of the Druids: "Were I to compose the strain, were I to sing, magic spells would spring, like those produced by the circle and wand of Twrch 'Trwyth." I think I have somewhere read, that the sophists of India, also, pretended to possess the power of charming venomous reptiles; and there can be little doubt the art was long practised in Britain, since it has been supposed that the caduceus seen in the hand of Mercury had its origin in the British isles, where the Druids exercised the arts of charming serpents. And Toland, who, in his very learned work, has

brought to light so much curious information respecting Druidism, informs us that, in the Lowlands of Scotland, many glass amulets were found which the people of that country called adder stanes. The Druids, we know, carried magic amulets about their persons; and it may also be remarked, that the adder itself was held as a symbol of the Helio-arkite god, and, therefore, of his priest, who took his station on the sacred mount, or in the no less sacred Diluvian lake*.

Now, all these things considered induce me to believe that as Dartmoor must from the earliest times have been most prolific in vipers, the mode of charming them with an ashen wand, still retained by the peasantry of the moor, is nothing less than a vestige of the customs of Druid antiquity.

Having paused a moment to consider the origin of the ashen wand and the circles about the adders, we once more turn our attention to Wistman's Wood; and near its commencement, on the south side, we find a spring of the clearest and the purest water, which Hannaford, the farmer, tells us never fails. It bursts from beneath a rock, and, like most of the blessings of Providence (whether we avail ourselves of them or not), it still pours its limpid

* The serpent's egg, which the Druids pretended to catch in the air, in order to impose upon the multitude, was held as a mystery. They wore this egg round their necks; no one in Britain except themselves knew the secret of manufacturing this kind of glass. "The priests," says Davies, "carried about them certain trinkets of vitrified matter, and this custom had a view to Arkite mysteries." The great Druid temple at Carnac (which I visited in early life) is, I am informed, now ascertained to be in the form of a *serpent*. Might it not, therefore, have had reference to the mysteries of the Diluvian, Helio-arkite god? Carnac stands very near the sea-shore.

fountain in fruitful abundance, amidst the wildness and desolation of the spot, and nourishes a thousand beautiful mosses and flowers, that render the moor, though a desert in one sense of the word, as a rich wilderness for Flora and her train.

We now view with surprise the oaks before us: and such is their singular appearance, that, without stopping to reason upon the subject, we are all disposed to think that they are really no other than the last remnant of a Druid grove; or rather the last vestige of its posterity. You, being a poet (for I must still be allowed to fancy you by my side), think of Lucan; and repeat the passage in his '*Pharsalia*,' where he describes the impression made on the Roman soldiery under Cæsar, on their entering beneath the gloom and solemnity of a Druid grove; their horror, their silent dread to touch with the axe that old and honoured wood: till Cæsar snatching it from their trembling hands, aimed the first blow and violated the oaks so long held sacred to a dark and sanguinary superstition.

When you have finished your quotation from Lucan, I tell you that Rowe, who was his translator into English verse, is said to have been born in Lamerton, only three miles from Tavistock; of which pretty little village his father was the incumbent. And Mr. Bray, who has long been an enthusiast about Dartmoor and the Druids, is ready to follow your quotation by repeating the noble lines from Mason's '*Caractacus*' descriptive of a Druid grove; whilst I, determined to have my share of poetical feeling, recite the sonnet, written by my husband, when very young, on Wistman's Wood; quite aware that, though I repeat it to the author of '*Madoc*,' he

has that generous feeling, not always found in those who have reached the summit of their art, to listen with good nature and indulgence to the productions of others who may stand afar off:—

TO WISTMAN'S WOOD.

Sole relics of the wreath that crown'd the moor!
 A thousand tempests (bravely though withstood,
 Whilst, shelter'd in your caves, the wolf's dire brood
 Scared the wild echoes with their hideous roar,)
 Have bent your aged heads, now scathed and hoar
 And in Dart's wizard stream your leaves have strew'd,
 Since Druid priests your sacred rocks imbrued
 With victims offer'd to their gods of gore.
 In lonely grandeur, your firm looks recall
 What history teaches from her classic page;
 How Rome's proud senate on the hordes of Gaul
 Indignant frown'd, and stay'd their brutal rage.
 Yet Time's rude hand shall speed, like theirs, your fall,
 That selfsame hand so long that spared your age.

Whilst these poetical feelings prompt each to some suitable expression of them, the farmer, a matter-of-fact man, looks as if he thought us all “a little mazed,” as they say in Devonshire, “about the wisht, old trees;” and now it being his turn to say something, he gives us his own legend about them; which is, that according to tradition, or as he expresses it, “as the people do tell, that the giants once were masters of all the hill country, and had great forests, and set up their karns (he calls them by their right name), and their great stones and circles, and all they old, ancient things about the moor.”

As we advance we again contemplate with wonder and interest the extraordinary object before us. It is altogether unlike anything else. There is a steep height, to toil up which I compare to going up the

side of a pyramid ; but you say it is a mole-hill compared to Skiddaw ; and Mr. Bray talks about the grand mountains of North Wales ; neither of which I have ever visited, though I have seen a real mountain in South Wales, and toiled up one, too.

The ascent to Wistman's Wood is strewn all over with immense masses of granite, that lie scattered in every direction. The soil about these rocks is very scanty, and appears, the same as in many other parts of the moor, to be composed of decayed vegetable matter. In the midst of these gigantic blocks, growing among them, or starting, as it were, from their interstices, arises wildly, and here and there widely scattered, *a grove of dwarf oak trees*. Their situation, exposed to the bleak winds, which rush past the side of the declivity on which they grow, and through the valley of the Dart at their base (a valley that acts like a tunnel to assist the fury of the gust), the diminutive height of the trees, their singular and antiquated appearance, all combine to raise feelings of mingled curiosity and wonder. The oaks are not above ten or twelve feet high, so stunted is their growth by the sweeping winds to which they stand exposed ; but they spread far and wide at their tops, and their branches twist and wind in the most tortuous and fantastic manner ; sometimes reminding one of those strange things called mandrakes ; of which there is a superstition noticed by Shakspeare—

Like shrieking mandrakes, torn from out the earth.

In some places these branches are literally festooned with ivy and creeping plants ; and their trunks are so thickly embedded in a covering of fine velvet

moss, that at first sight you would imagine them to be of enormous thickness in proportion to their height. But it is only their velvet coats that make them look so bulky; for on examination they are not found to be of any remarkable size. Their whole appearance conveys to you the idea of hoary age in the vegetable world of creation; and on visiting Wistman's Wood, it is impossible to do other than think of those "groves in stony places" so often mentioned in Scripture, as being dedicated to Baal and Ashtaroath. This ancient seat of idolatry seems to have undergone, also, a great part of the curse that was pronounced on the idolatrous cities and groves of old; for here, indeed, do "serpents hiss," and it shall never be inhabited, "neither doth the shepherd make his fold there;" "but the wild beasts of the desert and the owl dwell there," and "the bittern" still screams amidst its "desolation."

Many of the immense masses of granite around and under the trees are covered with a cushion of the thickest and the softest moss; but to sit down upon them would be rather too hazardous; since such a seat might chance to disturb from their comfortable bed a nest of adders that are very apt to shelter in such a covert; and few persons, now-a-days, would feel quite so confident as honest Hannaford in the power and efficacy of the ashen wand to render them innocuous. The oaks, though stunted and turning from the west winds to which they are most exposed, are by no means destitute of foliage; and the good-natured farmer cuts me down a branch to carry home in triumph, after having achieved the adventure of a visit to Wistman's Wood,—a visit by no means common with ladies. This branch has

upon it several acorns, the smallest I ever saw in all my life; but the leaves are of the usual size, and as vigorous as most other trees of the same kind.

I shall now give you a short extract from a very brief entry in Mr. Bray's journal of August 9th, 1827, concerning this wood. He says as follows:—
 “Tradition relates that Wistman's Wood was planted by the celebrated Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Devon*. But I do not hesitate to say, that, to any one who has visited the spot, it is evident no other hand has planted it than that of God. No one would or could have planted trees in the midst of such rocks.† They unquestionably can be no other than the remains of the original forest; which, though in its original acceptation—according to Du Cange in *V. Foresta*, it comes from *feris*, that is, *ferarum statio*, a station for wild beasts—it means but ‘a wild uncultivated ground interspersed with wood,’‡ must yet have had some trees, at intervals, in every part of it. At present (except here; and in some modern plantations, of which those of my father are the finest) there are none, though the trunks of trees are occasionally found in the bogs. It is not improbable that these trees were first very

* Among the peers of Henry the Second, was William de Fortibus, Earl of Albemarle, created Earl of Devon in right of his wife Isabel, sister and heiress to Baldwin de Redvers, or Rivers, eighth Earl of Devonshire. The title thus created in 1262 became extinct in 1270.

† That Wistman's Wood was *not* planted by Isabella de Fortibus is proved by the fact before noticed, that the record of a perambulation of the moor (made immediately after the Norman conquest) is still preserved in the office of the Duchy of Cornwall, by which we find Wistman's Wood was even at that remote period much the same as it now appears.

‡ Todd's Johnson's Dict. See also there the *legal* sense of the word.

generally destroyed by fire, in order to extirpate the wolves. The few that remained were destroyed by cattle afterwards pastured there; and it is only, perhaps, owing to their being so surrounded and interspersed with rocks that those of the wood in question have been preserved from a similar depredation.

“At the late visitation at Tavistock, on the 31st of May, Archdeacon Froude, a gentleman possessed of considerable antiquarian information, told me that he had lately obtained part of a tree from this wood, with a view, if possible, to discover its age by the number of circles from its centre to the circumference; that, by the aid of a microscope, he had counted about seven hundred; but that at times the divisions were so minute as hardly to be distinguishable; that, different from any other trees he had ever seen, the circles were more contracted, and in a manner condensed, on one side than on any other; and that he supposed this was the side the most exposed to the beat of the weather. On consulting Evelyn's *Silva*, I found the following passages in his second volume, which may throw some light upon the subject:—

“ ‘The trunk or bough of a tree being cut transversely plain and smooth, sheweth several circles or rings more or less orbicular, according to the external figure, in some parallel proportion, one without the other, from the centre of the wood to the inside of the bark, dividing the whole into so many circular spaces by the largeness or smallness of the rings, the quickness or slowness of the growth of any tree may, perhaps, at certainty be estimated.”

—p. 201.

“ ‘The spaces are manifestly broader on the one

side than on the other, especially the more outer, to a double proportion, or more; the inner being near an equality.

“ ‘ It is asserted that the larger parts of these rings are on the south and sunny side of the tree (which is very rational and probable) insomuch, that by cutting a tree tranverse, and drawing a diameter through the broadest and narrowest parts of the ring, a meridian line may be described.

“ ‘ It is commonly and very probably asserted, that a tree gains a new ring every year. In the body of a great oak in the New-Forest cut *transversely even* (where many of the trees are accounted to be some hundreds of years old) three and four hundred have been distinguished.’ These and other remarks, he attributes (p. 204) to ‘ that learned person, the late Dr. Goddard.’ For the age of trees, see Clarke’s Travels, vol. vii., p. 312. 4th Edit. 8vo.

“ My tenant, Hannaford, said that his uncle had found a few silver coins, about the size of a sixpence, in some of the cairns on the moor, and promised, if possible, to obtain for me a sight of them. He further informed me that he had lately destroyed what he called a *cave*,* which he described as composed of a large oblong stone supported, as a cover, by others set on edge at the head and foot, and on either side; and that, among the stones and earth within, he found some human hair clotted together, but no bones or other vestige of the body. Hair, it is said, will grow as long as there is any moisture in the body; but whether it will last longer than bones

* Or Kieve: which signifies, I believe, any large vessel, from a puncheon to a caldron. There is a waterfall in Cornwall called St. Nathan’s Kieve, probably from the basin into which it falls.

is a question that seems hardly yet decided. Might it not have been the scalp of an enemy, or hair offered up to the manes of the departed, or to some deity, of which this might be the altar? The remains of one of these British monuments still exist on Bair-down; but the ancient circular enclosures (of which there are so many near Wistman's Wood) that I myself remember there, were unfortunately destroyed when my father erected his ring-fence."

I have, my dear Sir, already given you Mr. Bray's conjectures as to the etymology of Wistman's Wood; and the opinion of its having been a grove sacred to the rites of Druidism, obtains no inconsiderable support from its immediate localities; since, notwithstanding the spoliation of successive ages, there still remain, close to it, many British antiquities. Such, for instance, as three cairns (and several others have been destroyed within the last twenty years to supply stones for the boundary walls, &c.), some hut rings, and the circles noticed by Mr. Bray in his Journal: these are all near the wood; whilst to the south of it lies Crockerntor, the undoubted seat of British jurisprudence on the moor, and of which I shall speak at large in my next letter. To the west, separated only by the narrow valley that is watered by the river Dart, is found Bair-down, or the hill of Bards. And Littleford tor is also not far distant from Wistman's Wood, contiguous to which is seen a group of above sixty hut circles. Thus then do we find that this venerable grove, situated in the very heart of the moor, is on all sides surrounded by vestiges of Druid antiquity.

Before I conclude this account of the wood (in which there is not one circumstance fictitious, excepting my having indulged in the fancy of your

being of the party when I visited it in 1827), I ought to mention that Mr. Bray conjectures that it was very probably one of the last retreats of the Druids of Damnonia, after they were exposed to the persecution of the Roman power. There appears to me nothing improbable in this conjecture; for we all know how long after that epoch the bards sought shelter, and existed in Caledonia, Armorica, Wales, and Cornwall. Dartmoor, so near the last named retreat, from its mountainous character, its want of roads, its deep recesses, its loneliness and general difficulty of access, must long have stood as an impenetrable barrier against persecution.*

On the moor, shelter and even safety might be found for those who, to the last, struggled to maintain their power; and who, rather than yield up the sacred privileges of that priesthood in which they had been trained from their earliest years, fled to rocks and deserts as their retreat; and there still preserved their sway, though reduced in numbers and confined within a comparatively small space for their dominion.

That such men were long welcome to, and upheld by the British people, is proved by the circumstance of the Bards having existed for so many generations in Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, and Wales, when they were extinct in all other parts of Great Britain. The natives of the soil, it cannot be doubted, long maintained a veneration for their ancient customs and superstitions; and their bards possessed that

* Mr. Polwhele considers that the Romans never penetrated into Dartmoor; and that this circumstance is the cause of no Roman barrows or antiquities being there found; all that have hitherto been discovered being undoubtedly British.

feeling, that tenderness which is ever the companion of poetry; and without which real genius, in any branch of literature, surely cannot exist: for if Plato's definition of genius be really true, that, even in its highest order, it is nothing more than "extent of sympathy," the bards might claim it as their own. Hence arose their power, and hence was it that they kept alive, by their pathetic appeals to the hearts of the Britons, all the pity that their own persecuted state was likely to call forth. They were, it is true, "fallen from their high estate," and from their acknowledged power; they were seared and blighted—yet from that very cause were they become but the more cherished and honored; even as the ancients hallowed those spots of earth that had been blasted by the lightning and the thunder-bolt of Jove—misfortune had touched them, and they were sacred.

In their bards, also, the Britons heard the voice of "other times," the history of their forefathers, the legends and traditions of their country. Such recitals could elevate or soften the souls of their auditors, as they sat around with the glistening eye, the suppressed respiration, and the varying and accompanying feeling to each modulation of their song, that could nerve the arm to action, or melt the heart to pity, as the subject arose to energy, or, chord by chord, died away in low sounds as the melody of melancholy spoke with irresistible power in the cadence of their harp. And when he, too, should be no more, the hardy British chief looked to the genius of the bards as the bulwark of his fame. The mossy stone and the cairn might mark the spot where rested the mortal fabric of his body, but his more enduring monument was in immortal verse;

that spirit of poesy, which, given by the great Giver of all good, is as a ray of the divinity here on earth. Long, therefore, were the bards cherished, long did they survive, honored in their ruin and in their fall; and now, perhaps, in the lonely and melancholy wood of Wistman, we behold one of the last decaying vestiges of their retreat.

Allow me to remain, my dear Sir,

Yours, &c., &c.,

A. E. B.

LETTER VII.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Fabrics of unhewn stone of Eastern origin—Examples given—The Gorseddau or Court of Judicature; its high antiquity—The solemnity of trial—Druid judges in civil and religious causes—Courts of Judicature held in the open air with the nations of antiquity—Crockerntor or Dartmoor—Such a Court in the Cantred of Tamare—Since chosen for the Court of the Stannaries—Account of Crockerntor in ancient and modern times—Tin traffic—Stannaries, &c.—The Judge's chair—Parliament-rock, &c., described—Longa-ford Tor—Rock basin—Many barrows on Stennen Hill—A pot of money, according to tradition, found in one of them—Bair-down Man, or British obelisk—The Grey Wethers; stones so called—Causes for Crockerntor being chosen by the Stannaries for their Parliament—Probably the Wittenagemot of this district succeeded on the very spot where the Gorseddau was held in British times—Grimspound a vast circular wall; its antiquity—Account of similar structures by Strabo and Cæsar—Arthur's Stone, a British structure of great interest—Flocks and herds of the Britons—Tin traffic—The scarlet dye mentioned by Pliny, probably alluding to the scarlet moss, from which dyes are formed, on the Moor—Excursion in search of Dennabridge pound—Horses in their free state—The river at Dennabridge—Judge Buller exonerated from having removed the great stone, used as a table by the old Stannators at Parliament-rock—The stone found at last far from its original station—Dennabridge pound, its extent, &c., described—Trunk of an oak tree, found by Hannaford, in a bog—Oak bowls found in a bog on the Moor; their great antiquity—River Cowsick—Inscription to Shakspeare on the rock below the bridge.

Vicarage, Tavistock, March 9th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I PURPOSE in this letter giving you some account of a place on Dartmoor which, it is most probable, was used in the days of the Britons as a tribunal of

justice. Unhewn stones and circles of the same, it is generally admitted, were raised for courts of this description; and we have the most ancient and undoubted authority—the Bible, for considering that fabrics of unhewn stone derive their origin (like the more rational parts of the religion of the Druids) from those eastern nations of which the Celtæ were a branch.

We find that the custom of erecting, or of consecrating monuments of this nature as memorials of a covenant, in honour of the dead, as places of worship, &c., prevailed even from the earliest times. Jacob and Laban made a covenant in Gilead; and no sooner was this done, than “Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar.” Joshua in passing over Jordan with the ark caused a heap of stones to be raised, that they “should be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.” And certain tribes also “built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see.” And after Joshua had destroyed Achan, “they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day.” The Jewish conquerors did the same by the King of Ai; and on Absalom “did they heap stones:” and Rachel’s monument, the first we read of in the Bible, was of stone, for Jacob “set up a pillar upon her grave.”*

There cannot, I think, be a doubt that the courts, as well as the temples of unhewn stone, had their origin in the East. And as the laws of the British people were delivered to them by the Druids, not as secular ordinances, but as the commands of the gods whom they adored, this circumstance no doubt added

* Vide Herodotus for the stones set up by Sesostris.

to the solemnity of their administration : so that it is not improbable the spot appointed for the Gorseddau or Court of Judicature was chosen with a view to the most advantageous display of its august rites. Hence an elevated station, like the temples of their worship, became desirable ; and there must have been a more than ordinary feeling of awe inspired in the mind of the criminal, by ascending heights covered, perhaps, with a multitude, to whose gaze he was exposed, as he drew nigh and looked upon those massive rocks, the seat of divine authority and judgment. How imposing must have been the sight of the priesthood and their numerous train, surrounded by all the outward pomps and insignia of their office ; as he listened, may be, to the solemn hymns of the Vates, preparatory to the ceremonial of justice, or as he stepped within the sacred enclosure, there to receive condemnation or acquittal, to be referred to the ordeal of the logan, or the tolmen, according to the will of the presiding priest !—As he slowly advanced and thought upon these things, often must he have shuddered and trembled to meet the Druid's eye, when, to use the words of Ossian, he stood by “ the stone of his power.”

The Druids not only adjudged, but with their own hands executed the terrific sentence they had decreed. The human victims which they immolated to appease, or to render propitious their deities, (particularly those offered to Hesus the God of Battles, and to Bel, or the Sun,) were generally chosen from criminals ; unless when the numbers demanded by the sacrifice induced them to mingle the blood of the innocent with that of the guilty, to

supply their cruel rites. And as these sacrifices were not merely confined to the eve of a battle, or to make intercession for the calamities of a kingdom, but were frequently offered up at the prayer of any chief or noble afflicted by disease, it is not unlikely that the condemned criminal was hurried from the Gorseddau to suffer as a victim to the gods, against whose supreme will all crimes were held to be committed that were done upon the earth.

That these ancient courts of justice were kept in the open air seems to be the most probable opinion, since such was the custom with many of the nations of antiquity; the Arcopagus of the Greeks is an instance. And in earlier ages we find it to have been much the same; as we read in the Bible of the elders pronouncing judgment "sitting in the gates." These gates were at the entrance of a town or city; a court that must have been in some measure held in the open air. With the Celtic nations it was unquestionably a practice that long prevailed amongst their posterity; since, in the ancient laws of Wales, the Judge was directed "to sit with his back to the sun or storm, that he might not be incommoded by either." *

One of these primitive courts, handed down as such by successive ages from the earliest times, through the various changes of government and

* Dr. Clarke when describing the Celtic remains at Morasteen, near old Upsal, says, "We shall not quit the subject of the Morasteen (the circle of stones) without noticing, that, in the *central stone* of such monuments, we may, perhaps, discern the origin of the Grecian (*Βῆμα*) *Bèma*, or *stone tribunal*, and of the 'set thrones of judgment' mentioned in Scripture and elsewhere, as the places on which kings and judges were elevated; for these were always of *stone*."

religion, is to this day found on Dartmoor: it is known by the name of Crockerntor,* the most curious and remarkable seat, perhaps, of Druidical judicature throughout the whole kingdom. It remained as the Court of the Stannaries till within the last century, and hence was it commonly called Parliament-rock. On this spot the chief miners of Devon were, by their charters, obliged to assemble. Sometimes a company of two or three hundred persons would there meet, but on account of the situation, after the necessary and preliminary forms had been gone through, they usually adjourned to Tavistock, or some other Stannary town, to settle their affairs. The Lord Warden, who was the Supreme Judge of the Stannary Courts, invariably issued his summons that the jurors should meet at Crockerntor on such a day; and by an accidental reference to an old magazine, I find a record of a meeting of this nature having been there held so late as the year 1749. If this was the last meeting or not, I cannot say, but I should think not, and that the custom died gradually away, till it was altogether abolished.

Some powerful motive, some deep veneration for ancient usages, or some old custom too well established to be easily set aside, must have operated to have caused these Stannary Courts, in comparatively modern times, to be held on such a spot as Crockerntor; whose rocks stand on the summit of a lofty

* Mr. Polwhele says, in his *Devon*, "For the Cantred of Tamare we may fix, I think, the seat of judicature at *Crockerntor* on Dartmoor; here, indeed, it seems already fixed at our hands, and I have scarce a doubt but the Stannary Parliaments at this place were a continuation even to our own times of the old British Courts, before the age of Julius Cæsar."

height open on all sides to the bleak winds and to the weather, affording no shelter from a storm, remote from the habitations of men, and, in short, presenting such a combination of difficulties, and so many discomforts to any persons assembling on matters of business, that nothing can be more improbable, I had almost said impossible, that such a place should have been chosen for the Stannary Courts, had it not been handed down as a spot consecrated to justice from the earliest ages.

Having offered these few introductory remarks on the subject of Crockerntor, I now give you the following extracts from Mr. Bray's journal of his survey of the western limits of Dartmoor, so long ago as the year 1802; when, though a very young man, he was the first person who really examined and brought into notice many of those curious Druidical antiquities in which it abounds. He spoke of them in various quarters; and some persons were induced, by what he said, cursorily to explore them. Of these a few, now and then, published some account, and though not unfrequently availing themselves of Mr. Bray's information, I do not know, excepting in one instance, that any person ever did him the justice to acknowledge the obligation, or even to mention his name as having been the first to lead the way to an investigation of what was still to be found on the moor:—

EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

“September 20th, 1802. Crockerntor, or Parliament-rock, is situated on Dartmoor, near the turnpike-road leading from Moreton to Tavistock, at the distance of about eleven miles from the former, and nine from the latter. Prince, in his ‘Worthies of

Devon,' p. 168, in his account of the family of Crocker, after informing us that Crockernwell received its name from them, says—' There is another famous place in this province, which seems to derive its name also from this family, and that is Crockerntor, standing in the forest of Dartmoor, where the parliament is wont to be held for Stannary causes; unto which the four principal stannary towns, Tavistock, Plinton, Ashburton, and Chagford, send each twenty-four burgesses, who are summoned thither when the lord warden of the Stannaries sees occasion: where they enact statutes, laws, and ordinances, which, ratified by the lord warden aforesaid, are in full force in all matters between tinner and tinner, life and limb excepted. This memorable place is only a great rock of moorstone, out of which a table and seats are hewn, open to all the weather, storms and tempests, having neither house nor refuge near it, by divers miles. The borough of Tavestock is said to be the nearest, and yet that is distant ten miles off.'

"I am not inclined to agree with Prince about the origin of the name of this rock, nor, from the present appearance of it, do I think his a correct description. The first thing that struck me was a rock, with a fissure in the middle, with one half of it split, either by art or nature, *into four pretty regular steps*, each about a foot and a half high and two feet broad.* Whether these were used as seats of emi-

* Crockerntor is not entirely granite, it is partly, I believe, of trap formation. The following very curious passage from 'Clark's Travels,' vol. iv., will be found most interesting here:—"Along this route, particularly between Cana and Turan, we observed basaltic phenomena; the extremities of columns, prismatically formed, penetrated the sur-

nence at the assembly of the tinnerns, I cannot pretend to say.



“Before this mass, towards the north, is a short ledge of stones evidently piled up by art, which might have been a continued bench. On ascending higher, I arrived at a flat area, in which, though almost covered with rushes, I could plainly trace out four lines of stones forming an oblong square, twenty feet in length and six in breadth, pointing nearly east and west. The entrance seems to have been at the north-west corner. At the north side, four feet distant, is another imperfect

face of the soil, so as to render our journey rough and unpleasant. These marks of regular or of irregular crystallization generally denote the vicinity of a bed of water lying beneath their level. The traveller, passing over a series of successive plains, resembling, in their gradation, the order of a staircase, observes, as he descends to the inferior *stratum* upon which the water rests, that where rocks are disclosed, the appearance of *crystallization* has taken place; and then the *prismatic* configuration is vulgarly denominated *basaltic*. When this series of depressed surfaces occurs very frequently, and the *prismatic* form is very evident, the *Suedes*, from the resemblance such rocks have to an *artificial flight of steps*, call them *trap*; a word signifying, in their language, a *staircase*. In this state science remains at present concerning an appearance in nature which exhibits nothing more than the common process of *crystallization*, upon a larger scale than has hitherto excited attention.”—p. 191.

line, and ten feet on either side is a straight natural buttress of rock. Possibly the table might have stood in the centre of this area, and these lines may be vestiges of the seats around it. I can hardly suppose the stone was so large as to rest on these as its foundation, though there are no stones in the middle that might have answered that purpose. Whilst the Lord Warden and Stannators presided at this table, probably the rest of the assembly filled up the remainder of the area, or climbed the rocks on each side.

“As an instance of the powers of the Stannary Court, I have been informed that a member of the House of Commons having spoken in it of the Stannaries in a manner that displeased the Lord Warden, as soon as the offending member came within the jurisdiction of his court, he immediately issued his precept, arrested him, and kept him in prison on bread and water till he had acknowledged his error and begged pardon for his transgression.

“Tin, on being melted, is put into moulds, holding generally somewhat above three hundred weight (then denominated *block-tin*), where it is marked, as the smelters choose, with their house-mark [that brought to Tavistock bears, I have generally observed, an *Agnus Dei*, or lamb holding a pennon] by laying brass or iron stamps in the face of the blocks while the tin is in a fluid state, and cool enough to sustain the stamping iron. When the tin is brought to be coined, the assay-master’s deputy assays it by cutting off with a chisel and hammer a piece of one of the lower corners of the block, about a pound weight, partly by cutting and partly by breaking, in order to prove the roughness

[query toughness?] and firmness of the metal. If it is a pure good tin, the face of the block is stamped with the duchy seal, which stamp is a permit for the owner to sell, and, at the same time, an assurance that the tin so marked has been examined and found merchantable. The stamping of this impression by a hammer is *coining* the tin, and the man who does it is called the *hammer-man*. The duchy seal is argent, a lion rampant, gules, crowned, or with a border garnished with bezants." See Rees' Ency.

The punishment for him who, in the days of old, brought bad tin to the market, was to have a certain quantity of it poured down his throat in a melted state.

Tin was the staple article of commerce with the Phœnicians, who used it in their celebrated dye of Tyrian purple, it being the only absorbent then known. This they procured from the Island of Britain. Its high value made the preservation of its purity a thing of the utmost consequence; any adulteration of the metal, therefore, was punished with barbarous severity. The Greeks were desirous of discovering the secret whence the Phœnicians derived their tin, and tracked one of their vessels accordingly. But the master of her steered his galley on shore, in the utmost peril of shipwreck, to avoid detection; and he was rewarded, it is said, by the State for having preserved the secret of so valued an article of national commerce.

The next extract I here send you is from Mr. Bray's Journal of June 7th, 1831.

"My wife, her nephew, and myself, set out from Bairdown, between twelve and one o'clock, for Crockerntor. In addition to the wish she had long felt of seeing it, her curiosity was not a little raised

by my tenant's telling her that he could show her the *Judge's Chair*. And I confess that my own was somewhat excited to find out whether his traditionary information corresponded with my own conjectures, made many years ago, as to this seat of the president of the Stannators. He took us to the rock (situated somewhat below the summit on the south side of the Tor) which bears the appearance of rude steps, the highest of which he supposed to be the seat. It seems to be but little, if at all, assisted by art, unless it were by clearing away a few rocks or stones. Below it is an oblong area, in which was the table, whilst around it (so says tradition) sat the court of Stannators: whence it is also known by the name of Parliament-rock. This stone, I had been informed, was removed by the late Judge Buller to Prince Hall; but my tenant told me that it was drawn by twelve yoke of oxen to Dennabridge, now occupied by farmer Tucket, on the Ashburton road, about ten miles from Tavistock. It is now used, he said, as a shoot-trough, in which they wash potatoes, &c.

“From this, as far as I can comprehend his meaning, I should conceive that it serves the purpose of a lip, or embouchure, to some little aqueduct that conveys the water into the farmer's yard. The Tor itself is of no great height, and is now much lower than it was, by large quantities of stone having been removed from its summit for erecting enclosures and other purposes. It could not be chosen, therefore, for its supereminent or imposing altitude; though possibly it might be so for its central situation; but I am disposed to think that it was thus honoured from being used as a judicial court from time immemorial. My reasons I shall mention hereafter. I

shall remark here, however, that it is the first tor of any consequence that presents itself on the east side of the Dart, upon the ridge that immediately overhangs its source.

“We then proceeded along this ridge to Little Longaford, or Longford Tor. This, in Greenwood’s map, which is defective enough in regard to names, is thus distinguished from a larger one; whilst the tors that follow Crockerntor in succession are there called Littlebee tor, Long tor, Higher-white tor, and Lower-white tor. White tor, or Whitentor, as my tenant pronounced it, we did not visit; and as I have some doubts about the real names of the tors, I shall only say that the first (a small one) that we approached had something in its appearance which so much reminded me of Pewtor, that I asked the guide if there were any basins in it: at first he replied in the negative, but afterwards said he thought he had once observed a basin on one of these tors. This was enough to ensure a search, and we were not long in finding one. It was in the shape of a rude oval, terminating in a point or lip, about twenty inches long, eighteen wide, and six deep. A square aperture among the rocks here, somewhat like a window, suggested the idea of its possibly having been used as a tolmen, through which children, and sometimes, I believe, grown people, were drawn to cure them of certain diseases. The second tor was much less, but large enough to afford Mrs. Bray, who felt fatigued, sufficient shelter from the sun and wind whilst we proceeded; and there we left her busied with her sketch-book.

“Between this and the great tor we found several pools of water, though it was the highest part of the

ridge, and though the season had been so free from rain (a circumstance not very common in Devonshire) as not only to render the swamps of Dartmoor passable, but almost to dry up the rivers. Longford Tor is more conical than most of the eminences of the forest, having very much the appearance of the keep of a castle. Unlike also the generality of tors, which mostly consist of bare blocks of granite, it has a great deal of soil covered with turf, and only interspersed with masses of rock, whilst the summit itself is crowned with verdure. Towards the north is White or Whiten Tor: for the Devonians soften, or, as some may think, harden, words by the introduction of a consonant, but more frequently of a vowel; and they are laughed at for saying Black-a-brook instead of Blackbrook, though we perceive nothing objectionable in Black-a-moor, which is precisely upon the same principle of euphony. On this tor, some years ago, were found some silver coins, and, I believe, human hair. And on Stennen hill, which lies below it, if I may trust my informant, are many barrows, in one of which was supposed to have been found 'a pot of money,' whilst two men of the name of Norrich and Clay were employed in taking stones from it. The former, it is said, discovered it without communicating it to his companion, but sent him to fetch a 'bar-ire,' or crow-bar, whilst he availed himself of the opportunity to appropriate the contents to himself. The inference seems principally to be drawn from the circumstance that he afterwards was known to lend considerable sums of money at interest.

"The greatest extent of view from Longford Tor is towards the east and south-east. In that direction,

as far as I could collect, you see Staple Tor (so that there seems to be two of this name on the moor), High, or Haytor, Bagtor, Hazeltor, &c. On Haytor (which is commonly called Haytor rocks), though at so great a distance, is visible a kind of white land or belt about its base, made by the removal of granite: so that we can more easily account for it than those of Jupiter. Of the tors that lie towards the south and south-west, Hessory is certainly higher than Longford (which my guide at first doubted), as also Mistor. Nearer are Bair-down and Sidford tors. Bair-down-man (which, however, we could not see) is a single stone erect, about ten feet high. To these succeeded, towards the north, Crow, or Crough-tor, and Little Crowtor. I learnt from my guide that at a place called Gidley there are circles much larger and far more numerous than near Merrivale. There are also two parallel lines about three feet apart, which stretch to a considerable distance. In order to see them, you must go to Newhouse, about twelve or thirteen miles on the Moreton road from Tavistock, and there turn off into the moor for about four or five miles. I also learnt that near the rabbit warren there is something that goes by the name of the King's Oven.

“We again on this day visited Wissman, Wistman, or Welshman's Wood (concerning the etymology of which I have some remarks in my former papers): it is about half a mile in extent, and consists principally of oaks, but is here and there interspersed with what is called in Devonshire the quick-beam or mountain-ash. I conceive it to have been the wood of the Wise-men, and Bair-down, on the opposite side, the Hill of Bards. On the latter were

formerly many circles, which, I am sorry to say, were destroyed by the persons employed by my father in making his enclosures. Would they have given themselves but a little more trouble they might have found a sufficient supply among those stones or rocks which are thickly scattered on a spot opposite the wood, and to which they give the name of the Grey Wethers. I think that the same name has been given to some stones at Abury, with which is supposed to be erected Stonehenge. If so, the coincidence is not a little remarkable. They possibly may be so called from resembling at a distance a flock of sheep. The resemblance indeed had struck me before I heard the name.

“I shall now state the reasons why I think Crockern Tor was chosen by the miners as the chief station for holding their Stannary Courts. It is but little more than a mile from what I venture to consider as the Hill of Bards and the Wood of Wisemen, or Druids. On, or near each of these are numerous circles, which, whether they were appropriated to domestic or religious purposes (most probably to both), clearly indicate that it must have been a considerable station. This was not only supplied with water from the river, but two or three springs arise from the rocks at the bottom of the wood itself. Well sheltered and well watered (for not only had they trees to screen them from the storm, but they had also a comparatively snug valley, open only to the south), it is no wonder that the aborigines here fixed their habitation. The circles, the wood, the existing names, all seem to lead to the supposition that some of the high places in their immediate neighbourhood were originally those of superstition

and judicature, where priest, judge, and governor were generally combined. The tor that we may thus imagine was appropriated by the ancient Britons, might afterwards (from traditionary veneration for the spot) be used by the Saxons for assembling together their Wittenagemot, or meeting of Wisemen, and lastly, for a similar reason, by the miners for their Stannary Courts."

Before I give you Mr Bray's account of Dennabridge Pound, which will be the next extract from his Journal, it may not be amiss to observe that there is on Dartmoor another remarkable vestige, and one better known, of like antiquity, called Grimspound. Like that of Dennabridge, this truly cyclopean work is an enclosure, consisting of moor stone blocks, piled into a vast circular wall, extending round an area of nearly four acres of ground. Grimspound has two entrances, and a spring of water is found within, where the ruins of the stonerings huts are so numerous as to suggest the idea of its having been a British town. It is well known that the foundations of all these primitive dwellings were of stone, though their superstructure, according to Diodorus and Strabo, was of wood. For they "live," says the former, "in miserable habitations, which are constructed of wood and covered with straw." And, when speaking of the Gauls, the latter says, "they make their dwellings of wood in the form of a circle, with lofty tapering roofs."

In some instances it is not improbable that the larger stone circles are vestiges of enclosures made for the protection of cattle. The Damnonii were celebrated for their flocks and herds; and the wolves, the wild cats, and the foxes, with which this country

once abounded, must have rendered such protection highly necessary for their preservation. I have often remarked on Dartmoor two or three small hut-rings, and near them a larger circle of stones; the latter I have always fancied to have been the shelter of the flocks, and the former the dwellings of their owners. There is nothing perhaps very improbable in this conjecture: since many tribes of the ancient Britons were, like the Arabs, a wandering and a pastoral people; and it is also worthy observation, that to this day the Devonians never fold their sheep; but, on Dartmoor in particular, still keep them within an enclosure of stone walls set up rudely together without cement. Where extensive stone circles are found near what may be called a *cursus*, or *via sacra* (of which I shall have much to say hereafter), or near cromlechs and decaying altars, we may fairly conclude such to have been erected not as the habitations of individuals, but as temples sacred to those Gods whose worship would have been considered as profaned within any covered place, and whose only appropriate canopy was held to be the Heavens in which they made their dwelling.

The circles within Grimspound are different from these; and that this vast enclosure (as well as Denabridge Pound) was really a British town, seems to be supported by the accounts given of such structures by Strabo and Cæsar. The latter describes them as being surrounded by a mound or ditch for the security of the inhabitants and their cattle. And Strabo says, "When they have enclosed a very large circuit with felled trees, they build within it houses for themselves and hovels for their cattle."*

* "The universality of Celtic manners, at a very remote period, is proved by the existence of conical thatched houses, as among the

That the people of Dartmoor should prefer granite to felled trees for such an enclosure is nothing wonderful, inasmuch as the moor abounds with it: in fact it must have been then, the same as in the present day, a much easier task to have piled together the blocks and pieces of stone, strewed all around them, than to have felled trees for the purpose of forming their walls; and how much greater was the security afforded by a granite fence, to one of mere timber! In other parts of Britain, such as Cæsar saw and described, rock or stone was not so easily or so plentifully to be found. The Britons, therefore, very naturally availed themselves of what the country would most readily afford; and the wild and vast forests supplied materials for their public walls as well as their private dwellings.

Stones, however, it is probable, were in all places considered as indispensable in the erection of those structures sacred to the rites of religion; and hence is it that we often see such enormous masses piled on places where it seems little less than miraculous to find them: for no stones of a similar nature being seen in their immediate neighbourhood, gives rise to the belief that they must have found their present stations by being moved from a distance, and not unfrequently to the summits of the loftiest hills and mountains: such, for instance, is that most extraordinary cromlech called Arthur's Stone on the eminence of Cevyn Bryn in South Wales*. That most of these structures were of a sacred nature can-

Britons, and rude stone obelisks, adjacent tumuli, and Druidical circles, in Morocco."—*Gentlemen's Magazine*, July, 1831. Dr. Clarke, the celebrated traveller, gives a very interesting account of vestiges similar to those found on Dartmoor in Sweden and other northern counties. See the ninth volume of his Travels.

* An account of this ancient British monument was laid before the

not well be doubted. No impulse either on the public or the private mind is so strong as that dictated by a feeling of religion, even when it is misdirected: no labours, therefore, have ever equalled those of man when he toils, in peace or in war, for the honour or the preservation of his altars.

That Grimspound and Dennabridge sheltered both the Britons and their cattle seems the more probable when we recollect the general customs of that people, and of the Damnonii in particular; since, in every way, their flocks must have been to them of the highest value. They were allowed to be the most excellent in Britain; the constant verdure of this county no doubt rendered them such. They were not merely useful at home, but an article of commerce abroad; and Cæsar says, that "the Britons in the interior parts of the country were clothed in skins." It is not improbable, therefore, that the Damnonii found their account in the wool and skins of those flocks for which they were so famed, as a convenient clothing for their neighbours.

Their tin traffic with the Phœnicians had early initiated them into a knowledge of the advantages and benefits of commerce. And as I have long taken a pleasure in busying myself to trace out, in connexion with ancient times, whatever may be found in nature or in art on Dartmoor, I amuse myself with fancying that I have discovered an allusion in Pliny to the beautiful and scarlet moss still found on the moor, which, not many years ago, was used as a dye for cloth. Indeed, it is not improbable that, as such, it became an article of commerce even in the days of the ancient Britons; for

Society of Antiquaries by my brother, Alfred J. Kempe. It may be found in the twenty-third volume of the *Archæologia*.

Pliny says, when speaking of British dyes, that they were enriched by “wonderful discoveries, and that their purples and *scarlets* were produced only by certain wild herbs.”

How sadly have I rambled in these pages! It is a good thing that in letters there is no sin in being desultory, or how often should I have offended! But letters are something like the variations of an air of music; you may run from major to minor, and through a thousand changes, so long as you fall into the subject at last, and bring back the ear to the right key at the close. Once more, therefore, I fall back on Dennabridge Pound, and here follows the extract from Mr. Bray’s journal:—

“On the 25th of July, 1831, I set out in search of two objects on the moor; namely, the table, said to have been removed from Crockern Tor, and Dennabridge Pound, which (like all, or most others on the moor) I had understood was on the site of a Celtic circle. On going up the hill beyond Merri-vale bridge, some horses and colts, almost wild, that were in an inclosure near the road, came galloping towards us, and, either from curiosity or the instinctive feeling of sociability, kept parallel with the carriage as far as their limits would allow. One of them was of a light sorrel colour; whilst its mane, which was almost white, not only formed a fine contrast, but added considerably to the picturesque effect of the whole by its natural clusters waving and floating, now in the air, now adown its neck, and now over its forehead, between its eyes and ears. My attention, perhaps, was the more directed to it, from having previously asked my servant who drove us, why the manes of my ponies were turned in opposite directions, as I thought (though I pos-

sibly may be mistaken) that it was one, among many other cavalry regulations, that the mane of a horse should turn differently from that of a mare. He seemed to recognise the rule by his reply, which was, that he could not get the mane of one of them to lie on the proper side. I could not help thinking that we deformed our horses by cropping their manes and tails, besides cruelly depriving them of their natural defence against flies. And enthusiastically as I admire the taste of the Greeks, particularly in sculpture, I cannot but confess that, if I may be allowed to consult my own eyes for a standard, they seem to have violated true taste and rejected a rich embellishment, in representing, as on the Elgin marbles in the British Museum, all their horses with hogged manes. Having thus run from painting to sculpture, and from England to Greece, though it may still, perhaps, be traced to association of ideas, I must be allowed to return to those connected with our native soil, and somewhat, perhaps, with the objects of our present pursuit (which may account also, accumulatively, if more apologies be wanting, for these digressions), by stating that I had but a little before remarked, *en badinant*, to my wife, that she might fancy herself Boadicea hastening in her war-chariot to meet the Druids in their enchanted circles.

“Near a bridge, over which we had passed, I observed, on the right of the road, a circle, seven paces in diameter, with a raised bank around, and hollow in the centre. Having come about ten miles from Tavistock, which I had understood was the distance of Dennabridge Pound, I entered a cottage near, to make inquiries for the object of our pur-

suit, but could gain little or no information, finding only a girl at home who had not long resided there. I had observed on the map that there was not only Dennabridge Pound, but also a place called Denna-bridge, which I learnt from this girl was about a quarter of a mile distant. Seeing nothing at the former place that at all corresponded with the object of my search, I resolved on proceeding to the latter; not without hopes that I should meet with some kind of primitive bridge, consisting perhaps of immense flat stones, supported on rough piers, which was the ordinary construction of our ancient British bridges.

“ Seeing a person whom I considered one of the natives near a cottage, I pointed to a lane that seemed to lead towards the river, and asked if it was the way to Dennabridge. The answer I received was, ‘ This, Sir, is Dennabridge.’ My informant seemed as much surprised at my question, as I was at his reply, and we both smiled, though probably for different reasons. No signs of one being visible, I inquired (and I think naturally so) where was the bridge that gave name to the place? He said that he knew not why it was so called, but that there was no bridge near it. Observing, however, at some distance down the river, what seemed not unlike the piers of one, of which the incumbent stones or arches might have fallen, I asked if a bridge had ever stood there. He believed not, but said that they were rocks; situated, however, so near each other, that it was the way by which persons usually crossed the river. Understanding that the spot was difficult of access, particularly for a lady, we did not go to it; but I am rather disposed to think that the place is

not so called, as was *lucus a non lucendo*, but that these rocks were considered as a bridge, or at least *quasi* a bridge. And perhaps it deserved this name as much as that which is thus mentioned by Milton in his description of Satan's journey to the earth.

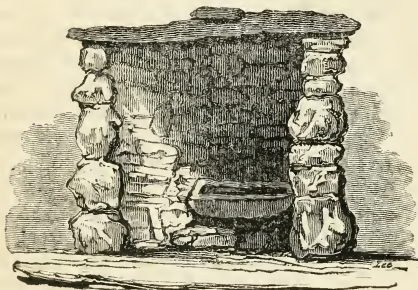
‘ Sin and Death amain,
Following his track, such was the will of Heaven,
Paved after him a broad and beaten way
Over the dark abyss, whose boiling gulf
Tamely endured a bridge of wond’rous length,
From Hell continued, reaching the utmost orb
Of this frail world.’

“ On further conversation with this man, I learnt that he lived at Dennabridge Pound, where there was no stone of the kind I inquired for, but that at Dennabridge itself, hard by, was a large stone that possibly might be the one in question. I asked if he had ever heard that it had been brought thither by the late Judge Buller. He said that it must have been placed there long before the judge's time; that he knew the judge well, and had lived in that neighbourhood forty years or more. Perhaps I might have obtained the information I wanted long before, had I asked for what I was told to ask; namely, for a stone that was placed over a *shoot*. But, absurdly, I confess, I have always had an objection to the word; because, in one sense at least, it must be admitted to be a vulgarism even by provincialists themselves. The lower classes in Devonshire, almost invariably, say *shoot* the door, instead of *shut* the door. And when it is used by them to express a water-pipe, or the mouth of any channel from which is precipitated a stream of water, I have hitherto connected it with that vulgarity which arises from the above *abuse* of the word. But if we write

it, as perhaps we ought, *shute*, from the French *chute*, which signifies *fall*, we have an origin for it that may by some, perhaps, be considered the very reverse of vulgar, and have, at the same time, a definite and appropriate expression for what, otherwise, without a periphrasis, could hardly be made intelligible.

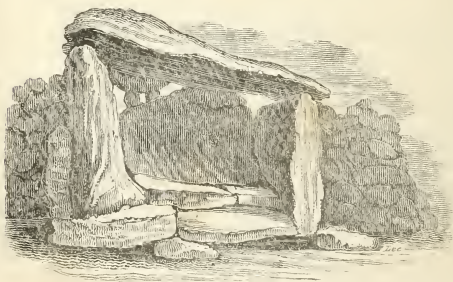
“ At the entrance of the farm-yard adjoining, is, I doubt not, the stone I had gone so far in search of, though I could not gain such satisfactory information as I anticipated. The farmer who lives on the spot exonerates the Judge, as did my first informant, from having committed the spoliation with which he has been charged. He says that it has been there, to his own knowledge, for fifty years; and that he has heard it was brought from Crockern Tor about eighty years ago. He further says that it was removed by the reeve of the manor. His wife, who is the daughter of this reeve (or his successor, I do not remember which), says that she, also, always heard that it had been brought from Crockern Tor, but she does not think that it could have been the table, as she remembers that her father used to take persons to the spot as a guide, and show them the table, chair, and other objects of curiosity on the tor. I thought I could perceive that the reeve of the manor was at any rate considered a great personage, and not the less so, perhaps, by being the Cicerone, or guide to the curiosities of the forest; for this is the word by which the inhabitants are fond of designating the treeless moor. I do not know whether the reeve, with the spirit of an antiquary, had any veneration for a cromlech, and therefore wished to imitate one; but, if such were his intention, he succeeded not badly: for the stone

(which is eight feet long by nearly six wide, and from four to six inches thick) is placed, as was the quoit in such British structures, as a cover, raised upon three rude walls, about six feet high, over a trough, into which, by a *shute*, runs a stream of water. And



probably the idea that the removal of this stone was by some one in authority, may have given rise to the report, that such person could be no less than Judge Buller, who possibly might be supposed to give sentence for such transportation (far enough certainly, but not beyond sea), in his judicial capacity: to which, perhaps, some happy confusion between him and the judge or president who sat in the Stannary Court may have contributed. Nay, possibly the reeve or steward may have considered himself to be the legal representative of the latter, and to have removed it to his own residence. We thence returned to Dennabridge Pound. On clambering over the gate, I was surprised to find close to it a rude stone seat. Had I any doubt before that the pound was erected on the base of an ancient

British, or rather Celtic circle, I could not entertain it now: for I have not the slightest doubt of the high antiquity of this massy chair. It is not improbable that it suggested the idea of the structure over the trough. And it is fortunate that the reeve had not recourse to this chair, instead of the stannary table, for the stone he wanted. It certainly was handier; but possibly it would have deprived him of showing his authority and station by occasionally sitting there himself. But I am fully convinced that it was originally designed for a much greater personage; no less perhaps than an Arch-Druid, or the President of some court of judicature. Two upright stones, about six feet high, serve as sides or elbows. These support another, eight feet long, that forms the covering overhead. The latter, being in a sloping direction, to give greater shelter both from wind and rain, extends to the back, which consists also of a single stone. In front of it are two others, that supply the immediate seat, whilst a kind of step may be considered as the foot-stool.



“The enclosure, pound, or circle, is about 460 paces in circumference on the inside. The wall of it has a double facing, the external part being a little higher than the inner. Though far beyond the memory of man, *this superstructure* is unquestionably modern, when compared with the *base or foundation*, which is ruder, and of larger stones. There are a few rocks scattered about in the area. I thought, however, that I could distinguish the vestige of a small circle near the centre, through which passed a diametrical line to the circumference, but somewhat bent in its southern direction towards the chair.

“On reaching Bair-down, I was told by my tenant Hannaford, that there could be no doubt but I had seen the right stone, and that he believed the report of its being removed by Judge Buller was wholly without foundation. On referring afterwards to Mr. Burt's notes to Carrington's poem on Dartmoor, I find he treats it as ‘a calumny.’ I believe that by our different conversations with Hannaford we have made him a bit of an antiquary, and I was no less surprised than delighted when he informed me that, only a few days before, he had brought home an oak that he had discovered in a bog, at a place called Broad-hole, on Bair-down. I have heard Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt say that he had found alders and willows in a bog near Tor Royal; but I do not remember to have heard of any oak being so found, at least of such dimensions. The tree thus discovered, which consists of the trunk, part of the root, and also of a branch, is ten feet long, and, at its lower extremity, is nearly five feet in girth. The whole of the trunk is perfectly sound, but not altogether so dark or solid as I should have expected:

for generally, I believe, and particularly when it has been deposited in a bog, it is as hard and as dark as ebony. A branch of it had for some time been visible in the bank of the river Cowsick, and this induced Hannaford to examine it, and finally to exhumate it from the depth of eight feet. It is not improbable that this is a vestige of the antediluvian forest of the moor. Distant from Wistman's Wood about two miles, and by the side of another river, it could never have formed part of it; indeed it is probably larger than any there: and we have no account for ages of any other oaks existing on the whole of this extensive desert. A day or two after he brought it to Tavistock, and it is now in my possession.

“I learnt from him that some years since some oak bowls* were found in a bog, by a person called John Ash, between the Ashburton and Moreton roads.

“On crossing the bridge which was erected by my father over the Cowsick, Mrs. Bray expressed a wish that I would point out to her some of my inscriptions on the rocks below, which, from some strange circumstance or other, she had never seen; and even now I thought that, without much search, we should not have found them; not recollecting, after so long a period, where I had placed them. But, on looking

* Bowls formed of oak were used by the ancient Britons. Mention is made of them in Ossian; and in the Cad Godden, or the Battle of the Trees, by Taliesin, the following passage occurs:—“I have been a spotted adder on the mount” (alluding to the serpent's egg); “I have been a viper in the lake. I have been stars among the supreme chiefs; I have been the weigher of the falling drops” (the water in the rock basins), “drest in my priest's robe, and furnished with my bowl.”

over the parapet, she observed, on one of the rocks beneath, the name of her favourite Shakspeare. Perhaps, under other circumstances, it might have altogether escaped notice; but the sun was at that instant in such a direction as to assist her in decyphering it, as it did some of our English officers in Egypt, who thus were able to interpret the inscription on Pompey's Pillar, which the French sçavants had so long attempted in vain. Many an officer (for a large body of troops had guarded, for years, the French prison on the moor) no doubt had visited Bair-down, and probably fished on the river, and yet these inscriptions seem never to have attracted their notice, nor, indeed, that of other persons; or, if they have, it has never reached my ears. But I have long been taught to sympathise with Virgil, when he exclaims—

‘ Rura mihi, et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes,
Flumina amem sylvasque inglorius.’—Geo. l. ii. 485.

“ Had my name been so renowned as ‘ virûm volitare per oras,’ I doubt whether I should have experienced greater pleasure than I felt when my wife first discovered my inscription on the rock, and expressed the feelings it excited in her. I question whether, for the moment, she felt not as much enthusiasm as if she had been on the Rialto itself, and there had been reminded of the spirit-stirring scenes of our great dramatist in the ‘ Merchant of Venice.’ I have somewhere read, that a philosopher having been shipwrecked on an island which he fancied might be uninhabited, or, what perhaps was worse, inhabited by savages, felt himself not only perfectly at ease, but delighted at seeing a mathe-

matical figure drawn upon the sand; because he instantly perceived that the island was not only the abode of man, but of man in an advanced stage of civilization and refinement. It certainly was a better omen than a footprint; for the impression of a human foot might have excited as much fear, if not surprise, as that which startled Crusoe in his desert island. Perhaps I fondly had anticipated that, long ere this, on seeing these inscriptions, some kindred being might have exclaimed, 'A poet has been here, or one, at least, who had the feelings of a poet.' I would have been content, however, to remain unknown still longer, thus to be noticed, as I was by one so fully competent to appreciate those feelings which, no doubt, to most would have appeared ridiculous, if not altogether contemptible."

As, since the days of Sir Charles Grandison, it is quite inadmissible for ladies to write to their friends the fine things that are said of them, I certainly should have stopt short before I came to this compliment about myself. But my husband, who was pleased to pay it, insisting that, if I took anything from his Journal, I should take all or none, I had no choice.

Adieu, my dear Sir,
And believe me ever most respectfully
and faithfully yours,
ANNA E. BRAY.

LETTER VIII.

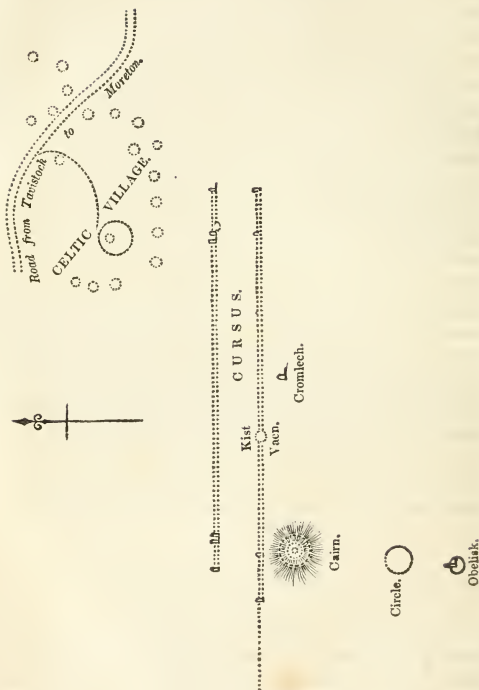
TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Account of the remains of the great Cursus near Merrivale Bridge—Plan of it—Fallen Cromlech; barrow; obelisk; large circle; foundation of circular British huts—Processions in the Cursus in ancient times—Their chariot races, &c.—The Welsh poem of Gododin; its great curiosity and interest as an historical record—its mention of a similar Cursus at Stonehenge—Remarks on Cromlechs—Various in their character and uses, examples given—Drewsteign-Tor, the finest Cromlech on Dartmoor—Cromlech near the Cursus of the Moor, probably a stone of sacrifice—Barrows on Dartmoor opened in 1790; urns found in them containing ashes, or the bones of human bodies, with coins and instruments of war—British monumental inscribed stones—Augury of birds common with the Druids—Great antiquity of the superstition—Remarks on the subject—Sacred springs and fountains—The Cauldron of Ceridwen—Casting lots; twigs, branches, and herbs used in sortilege—Water in rock basins, for what purpose collected—Rocking or Logan Stones still found on the Moor—their uses—Ancient British bridges on Dartmoor described—Ancient trackways and leets of Mines seen on the Moor—Gold and silver found in Britain, mentioned by Tacitus—Silver found in Devon.

Vicarage, Tavistock, April 10th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

WE have on Dartmoor, at a short distance from Merrivale bridge, and nearly four miles from Wistman's Wood, some very remarkable vestiges of the Cursus, or Via Sacra, used for processions, chariot races, &c., in the Druidical ceremonies. This Cursus is about 36 paces in breadth, and 217 in length. It



Map of the great Circus, Circles, &c., near Merrivale-bridge, Dartmoor.

is formed of pieces of granite that stand one, two, or sometimes three feet above the ground in which they are imbedded: a double line of them appears placed with great regularity on either side, as you will see in the drawing of the ground plan. A circle in the middle of the cursus breaks the uniformity of line in part of it. There are, near this extensive range of stones, many remains of Druidical antiquity; such as a fallen cromlech, a barrow, an obelisk, a large circle, and several foundations of the round huts, or houses of the Britons. A cursus of this nature is found near Stonehenge; Borlase, I believe, mentions one at Classerniss in the Isle of Lewis, another is seen in Anglesea, and we have this remarkable vestige on Dartmoor.

Processions formed a distinguished part of the ceremonies observed in Druidical festivals. According to Davies, the sacred ship of glass was borne along the cursus with the utmost pomp on the day of observing the mysteries of the Helio-arkite God. The procession of Godo, the British Ceres, was no less splendid: it took place in the evening, as that of the solar deity did in the morning. And the cursors at such moments must have presented scenes like those exhibited by the abominable priests of Baal, of whom we read in the Bible: for in the midst of their wild dances, they cut and lacerated their bodies in honour of her mystic rites. "Let the thigh be pierced with blood," says Taliesin. And Aneurin thus describes the ceremonies of the procession sacred to Hu, the British Bacchus. "In honour of the mighty king of the plains, the king of the open countenance, I saw dark gore arising on the stalks of plants, on the clasp of the chain, on the

bunches (alluding to the flowers on the necks of the oxen), on the king himself (the God Hu*), on the bush, on the spear. Ruddy was the sea-beach, whilst the circular revolution was performed by the attendants of the white bands (the Druids) in graceful extravagance." The bard thus continues: "The assembled train were dancing after their manner, and singing in cadence with garlands on their brows."†

Chariot races, as well as the above-noticed processions, were also common with our British ancestors: they were likewise performed in the *cursus*; and it is not improbable that they became a part of the religious ceremonies of the festivals. In Germany, we know they were so; as the sacred chariot of the goddess who ruled over the affairs of men, its procession, and race, is most strikingly described by Tacitus in his delightful book on the manners of the Germans. I forbear to transcribe the passage, as I wish to mention one less known, that occurs in the very curious and ancient Welsh poem of Gododin: a poem, which, like the chronicles of Froissart, affords the most lively picture of the manners of the times to which it relates. Gododin is a poetical narrative, or history, of the conduct of Hengist and Vortigern in the cruel slaughter of the ancient Britons.

This act of treachery, the poet tells us, took place in the *cursus* near the great temple of Stonehenge; which he calls "the area of the sons of harmony," no

* Hu was the great demon God of the British Druids. Has he not ever been the same? For what passions are more demoniacal than those excited by a devotion to the God of wine?

† From the Rev. E. Davies's translation of Aneurin's song.

doubt in allusion to the bards. In addition to the light which Gododin throws on ancient manners, its incidents would afford the finest subject for a poem in the style of your "Madoc:" it would not be unworthy even of your muse. The time, the place, the variety of character, the cold-hearted cunning of the wily Saxon, or of the "Sca-drifted Wolf," as Hengist is styled by the Welsh poet; the distracted state of the Druid, who, casting the lots just before the feast begins, and finding their presage fatal to the Britons, fears to warn them, as he meets the eye of Hengist fixed sternly upon him; the frankness and honest confidence of the betrayed British chiefs; the sudden and fearful catastrophe, as the bowl with the flowing mead is raised to the lip; the resolute conduct of the bards who perish in defending the temple; the magnanimity of Eidiol (the young hero of the tale), who escapes at last from a host of enemies; all these and many other circumstances are highly dramatic, and would afford materials for a poem or romance, of great power and interest. So minutely does the Welsh bard describe everything connected with his subject, that he mentions even the amber beads worn as a wreath on the brows of Hengist; a circumstance whose correctness is ascertained by the heads of many Saxon princes being seen thus adorned in sundry coins that have been found in England.

I mentioned, at the commencement of this letter, that there is, near the remains of the ancient cursus on Dartmoor, a fallen cromlech. I shall here, therefore, before I proceed to the account of it, venture to offer a few observations respecting the purposes to which cromlechs were devoted; since, though I have always delighted in pursuits connected with antiquity,

I never yet could find any amusement in looking upon an old stone, or any other rude vestige, unless I could in some measure trace out its history, or understand what relation it might bear to the manners and customs of former ages: for without this connexion to give it an interest, to admire any thing merely because it is old, seems to me as great an absurdity, as it would be in the most uneducated person to affect delight in looking on the pages of Homer, when he did not understand one word of Greek, and possibly had never heard of the Iliad.

I am well aware that antiquaries differ in their opinions respecting the purposes to which cromlechs were applied. Far be it from me to suppose that I could throw any additional light on the subject: but as I have attentively read many of those opinions, and some were wholly opposite, I have been led to conclude that each may be in the right, though not exclusively, and that cromlechs were applied to *more* than *one* purpose; that they were sometimes used as altars of sacrifice, at others as sepulchral monuments, and not unfrequently as a mark of covenant. Mr. Owen considers them in the latter view, as the Grair Gorsedd or altar of the bards, placed within the ring of federation. To them, therefore, may be applied those lines of the poet—

“ Within the stones of federation there,
On the green turf, and under the blue sky,
A noble band, the bards of Britain stood,
Their heads in rev'rence bare, and bare of foot,
A deathless brotherhood.”*

Those cromlechs under which are found urns and human bones, were most likely sepulchral. We learn

* Madoc.

from Ossian that deceased heroes were deified by the ancient inhabitants of these islands; since the British Homer thus speaks of the tomb of Loda in a poem whose sublimity would stir the coldest bosom, Carric-Thura.

“A rock bends along the coast with all its echoing woods. On the top is the circle of Loda, the mossy stone of power!”

And again thus speaks the “spirit of dismal Loda,” in his emphatic address to Fingal—“The King of Sora is my son, he bends at the *stone of my power*.”

All cromlechs with wells or springs beneath them were most probably stones of federation;* since the forms of initiation with the bards invariably took place at a cromlech, where water might be found, as necessary to the mysteries. This initiation represented *death*, and a renovation from the dead: for the aspirant of Druidism was obliged to pass the river of death in the boat of Garan Hu, the Charon of Britain. Sometimes he was immersed in the water, or at others buried, as it were, beneath the cromlech; since, says Davies, “it was held requisite that he should have been mystically buried as well as mystically dead.” And cromlech, according to Logan, is a Punic word, and signifies the bed of death. The cells sometimes found under these antiquities no

* Arthur's stone on Cevyn Bryn no doubt was such. It stood within a *ring* of smaller stones; and a spring of water called the *Lady's well* was found beneath it. Hênwen, or old lady, was the goddess of the Arkite ceremonies. Arthur and his seven sons were said by the Druids to have been saved in the ark from the general deluge. The Helio-arkite rites celebrated their preservation. The ring of smaller stones around this vast Cromlech, the names of *Arthur's stone*, and the *Lady well*, so directly refer to the structure, the goddess and the hero of the rites, that there can be, I think, no doubt the stone itself was that of *federation* for the bards of the Arkite ceremonies.

doubt were used as the temporary burial-places of the bards, previous to the ceremonies of initiation; ceremonies that might differ according to the particular attributes or character of the god to whose honour and worship the bard more immediately devoted his life. This act of burial in the cells was considered as a necessary trial of his patience and his fortitude; it was seldom, if ever, dispensed with, and as it took place the day or night previous to initiation, it reminds us, in some measure, of that ceremony of later times, the vigil of arms practised by the novitiate of chivalry, on the night before he paid the vows, and received the honours of knight-hood.

By far the finest cromlech on Dartmoor is near Drewsteigton*—the very name speaks its high claim to veneration; and on the noble pile of rocks in that neighbourhood may be seen some rock basins that remain entire even to this day.

The fallen cromlech on the moor, which I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, derives its chief value from its immediate vicinity to the *Cursus*, or *Via Sacra* of the Druidical processions. From its situation it is more likely to have been a place of sacrifice than a stone of federation, or a memorial

* *Drew*, in the Celtic, and *drus*, in the Greek, signified an oak. The oak was sacred to the great god of the Druids. From *Drewester*, priest of the oak, we have the word *Druids*. The oak god was sometimes styled *Buanaur*, the quickener, before whom heaven and earth trembled. "A dreadful foe, whose name in the table book is *Drysawr*, the deity of the door." This, says Davies, "must apply to the deified patriarch, who received his family into the ark, and his connected votaries into the Druidical sanctuary." Acorns were held as offerings from the bards. *Taliesin* speaks of the "proud, the magnificent *circles* round which the majestic oaks, the symbols of *Taronuy*, the God of thunder, spread their arms."

for the dead. And this conjecture, I think, will not be found far fetched, when we recollect that Godo, the British Ceres, on the day of her festival, not only had her procession in the cursus, but also her sacred fire kindled in her temple or on her stone, which was never to be extinguished for a year and a day. It was, in fact, like that of Vesta, (originally derived from the Magi,) a perpetual fire. I have found one reference that bears upon this point in the translation of the ancient poems of the bards by Davies. It occurs in Gododin, before noticed, where the sacred fire near the Cursus of Stonehenge is called "the perpetual fire."* This very circumstance, therefore, renders it still more probable that the fallen cromlech in question, near the Dartmoor cursus, was a stone of sacrifice, where offerings were made to the sacred fire of the British gods. And henceforth I shall never visit that spot without indulging one of those day-dreams of romance that are so truly delightful. I shall fancy white-robed Druids, and blue-robed bards, and the procession of Godo, with all its attendant rites and offerings made on that very stone, where the cattle of the moor now solace themselves with rubbing their noses and their backs: "to what base uses may we not return!" Yet if human victims were ever there offered up amid the barbarous rites of idolatry, who would regret such degradation, who would do other than rejoice to see the harmless use to which it is now applied!

I mentioned also, that the line of the great cursus on Dartmoor was in one part broken by a stone circle. On circles, in their general character, I have

* Stonehenge was a temple of the sun; and fire was invariably used in the worship of its deity.

before ventured some remarks in my former letters. But respecting *this* found on the *line* of stones which *forms the Via Sacra*, I have a few observations to offer, as I am inclined to think it was more immediately connected with the ceremonies of the Helio-arkite procession. The idea struck me, when I found that Davies, in his very learned work on the mythology of the British Druids, so clearly proves that the *Caer Sidi* was no other than a figure of the sacred vessel in which the mythological Arthur and his seven sons escaped the general deluge. The *Caer Sidi* was, in fact, the ark of Noah. But as, in process of time, the British priests, like most other idolaters, blended their worship of the planets with whatever vestiges they might retain of true religion, (derived to them through Gomer the son of Japhet, and the father of the Celtic nations,) even so did they transfer the name of the ark to that "great circle" in which those luminaries, "emblems of their gods, presided and expatiated. In British astronomy it was become the name of the Zodiac."* In the most ancient songs of the bards, this *Caer Sidi*, or sacred circle, is constantly alluded to, sometimes as a ship preserving what was left of the inhabitants of the old world; at others as a celestial circle; and often as the temple of Druidical worship; and the circle of the Helio-arkite god is spoken of when the procession of the sacred ship becomes the theme of song.†

Not far from the *cursus* there is seen a barrow, no

* Davies' Celtic Remains.

† "With the circle of ruddy gems on my shield do I not preside over the area of blood, which is guarded by a hundred chiefs?" So writes Taliesin in his poem of *Cad Godden*. "This shield," says Davies, "was of the Helio-arkite God, and of his priest, having the

doubt the grave of some chief or noble of the *Damnonii*; as it is well known that heaps of earth (sometimes containing a *kistvaen*, or stone chest for the body, and at others only an urn) or barrows were the burial-places of the ancient Britons. Of these tumuli, Mr. Polwhele (whose learning and talents entitle his opinions to be received with the utmost respect) says, *none are Roman*. That gentleman also tells us that in the year 1790, a friend with whom he held a literary correspondence opened some of the barrows on Dartmoor; and found in them "urns filled with ashes, or the bones of a human body, together with ancient coins and instruments, sometimes of war." This account reminds us of the manner in which the ancient inhabitants of Caledonia made their graves: for if a warrior became the tenant, they placed his sword by his side, and the heads of twelve arrows; and not unfrequently the horn of a deer, as a symbol of the deceased having been a hunter.

The Britons, also, sometimes erected a single stone in memory of the dead. Possibly the obelisk seen near the *cursus* (which has no inscription) may be a memorial of this nature, and if so, of very high antiquity; since, judging by two noble funeral obelisks of Romanized British chiefs (now preserved in our garden) I should imagine that, after the Romans had overrun Britain, and not before, the Britons inscribed their monumental stones and pillars. On this point, however, I shall have more to say when I come to the subject of inscribed stones

image of *Caer Sidi*, the Zodiac, or of the Druidical temple, formed of gems and set in gold." The device still may be seen upon old British coins. The hierarch presided in the *area of the altar*, which was guarded by the priests and drenched with human blood.



This Sketch represents the Obelisk, and a Circle near it, on Dartmoor.

found in this neighbourhood, both of the British and the Saxon period.

I have before noticed what a fine field Dartmoor must have afforded the Druids for the augury of birds; and as I do not wish to break in upon the extracts from Mr. Bray's Journals, that will supply matter for many of my letters, before I take my leave of the Druids, I wish to offer a few desultory remarks that will not, I trust, be found altogether misplaced. Certain it is that in this neighbourhood, and on the moor in particular, birds are still considered as ominous of good or evil, more especially of the latter; and no reasoning will operate with the people who have imbibed these prejudices from their infancy, to make them consider such opinions as an unhallowed credulity.

Augury, indeed, seems to have been a universal superstition even in the earliest ages; and I have always thought that, like most other heathenish

customs, it took its rise in truth ; for surely it is not improbable that the dove of Noah bearing back to the ark the olive branch, in token of the flood having ceased, might have given birth to the confidence reposed in all auguries of the feathered tribes, a confidence which extended itself throughout the known world. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Gauls and Britons, and many other nations of antiquity, consulted the flight and appearance of birds. In Wales, the custom long held sway, and the bards sometimes celebrated these omens in their songs. Taliesin thus alludes to them, when he makes a priest say, "A cormorant approaches me with long wings. She assaults the *top stone* with her hoarse clamour: there is *wrath in the fates!* Let it burst through the stones! Contention is meet only amongst the grey wolves."

I have noticed, likewise, that there are certain springs on the moor which appear to have been considered with more than ordinary interest, such as Fitz's or Fice's well. And where we find so many vestiges of Druidical antiquity, it is most natural to conclude that even these springs were held in veneration at a very remote period. Water, we know, was used for many sacred purposes by the Druids; it was in fact essential in many of their religious rites. The celebrated cauldron of Ceridwen (which, according to Davies, implied not a *single vessel* used for one simple purpose) was nothing more than water taken from a sacred fountain and impregnated with a decoction of certain potent herbs. The "cheerful and placid vervain" was chief amongst these; and this decoction was used, like the holy water of the Church of Rome, for

purification or sprinkling. The cauldron of Ceridwen was placed in two vessels within the circle, or temple, east and west, and the priests moved round them reciting hymns or prayers. Pliny bears testimony to the use of vervain: as he says it was used by the Druids in their sortilege or lots of divination. And Tacitus, also, gives a particular account of the manner in which the German priests practised this custom of casting lots. I cannot immediately find the passage; but, if I recollect right, he mentions branches or twigs, as well as *herbs*, being used in sortilege. Some of the latter it was likewise usual to gather near a sacred fountain.

The purposes to which the water secured in *rock basins*, as it fell from the clouds, might have been applied, has, I am aware, long been a subject of dispute with antiquaries. But it is not improbable that the water in the rock basins, like the disputed cromlechs, was applied to more purposes than merely that of lustration or sprinkling. My reason for thinking so is grounded on certain passages in the poems of the bards; and if we reject the writings of the bards as authorities, where shall we supply their place? We might surely with as much reason reject the authority of Froissart for the manners and customs of the middle ages. Taliesin speaks of the mystical water as being the fountain of his own inspiration; and Davies (whose profound learning in Celtic antiquity cannot be too highly appreciated) tells us that in a mythological tale, describing the initiation of that celebrated bard, the goddess Ceridwen prepared the water from the sacred rock, and placed in it her potent herbs that had been collected with due observance of the planetary hours.

Rocking or Logan stones are still found on Dartmoor, notwithstanding the havoc that has been made amongst them during so many ages. There can, I think, be no doubt that these stones were engines of cunning in the hands of the Druids; who most probably made the multitude believe that they possessed a power more than natural, and could alone be moved by miracle at the word of the priest. One of their tricks respecting the secret means of setting a logan in motion on Dartmoor was accidentally discovered by Mr. Bray, in a way so remarkable, that I shall forbear any other mention of it in this place, purposing, hereafter, to send you his own account of the circumstance. The logan was in all probability not only resorted to for the condemnation or acquittal of the accused, but the very threatening, the mere apprehension of its supernatural powers in the detection of guilt, might have led the criminal to a full confession of those offences with which he stood charged.

Amongst the British antiquities of the moor, I must not forget to mention the rude vestiges of its primitive bridges. They are indeed so remarkable, that any description must convey but a very imperfect idea of them; and if I could but enjoy health sufficient to allow me to execute the schemes I have in mind, these bridges would form one subject for the graphic illustrations I am desirous of attempting for my work; yet alas, I *fear* to say I *will* do anything, since I cannot depend upon myself even for one day's health.

The construction of these bridges is exceedingly simple, being nothing more than masses of granite piled horizontally, and thus forming the piers, on a

vertically

foundation of solid rock, that nature has planted in the midst of the stream. The piers being thus formed, the bridge is completed by huge slabs of moor stone laid across and supported from pier to pier. Some few of these picturesque and primitive bridges still remain entire; others are seen in ruins. It is not unlikely they are unique in their construction; at least I can say that though I have visited in England, South Wales, and Brittany, many places celebrated for Celtic remains, I have never yet seen anything like our ancient Dartmoor bridges. They appear to have been placed in those spots where, on ordinary occasions, stepping-stones would have answered the purpose: but the sudden and violent rains with which the moor is visited render stepping-stones very insufficient for the convenience or security of the passenger. No person but one who is accustomed to witness the sudden swell, the turmoil, rapidity and force of a river or torrent in a mountainous region, during heavy rains, can have the least idea of the violence with which a traveller, attempting to cross from rock to rock, would be carried off and overwhelmed by one false step or slip in his hazardous passage. So sudden, sometimes, is the rush and swell of our Dartmoor rivers in storms of rain, that immense masses of granite, generally standing aloft above the waters, will be in a moment covered with a sheet of foam that resembles those fearful breakers at sea which always indicate hidden and fatal reefs of rock.

On the moor, also, are several ancient trackways together with stream-works, of very high antiquity. Mr. Bray is disposed to consider them of the same date with the Druidical remains. The art of working

metals was known to the Britons; and the mines of Dartmoor, though now fallen into neglect, were for many successive ages worked with considerable profit. Leland mentions them; and Mr. Polwhele says, "we are informed from *records*, that all the old mines on Dartmoor are on its western side towards the Tamar; there are strong marks both of shode and stream works." Leland speaks of these, and adds that "they were wrought by violens of water." Mr. Polwhele is of opinion that the Damnonii carried on their tin-traffic with the Greeks of Marseilles, and that the port Ictis in all probability was the Isle of St. Nicholas in Plymouth Harbour.* I have heard (though I have never been fortunate enough to see any) that, in breaking into old mines in this neighbourhood, heads of axes and other antiquities made of flint have been found: flint indeed has been the primitive material for most implements, not only with the ancient Britons, but with uncivilized nations even to the present day.

Of any minute particulars respecting the commerce of the Damnonii, nothing, I believe, is known. Like that of the other kingdoms of Britain, it principally consisted in hides and tin. But as Tacitus expressly declares that Britain produced both gold and silver, as well as other metals, it is not improbable that, even so early as the Roman conquest, the silver mines of this neighbourhood were not unknown to the Britons. The silver of Devon, in later times, was held in high estimation. Edward III. derived from it such considerable benefit, that it assisted him to carry on his brilliant and chivalrous career in

* Pinkerton is of opinion that the Cassiterides did not mean exclusively the Scilly Isles, but also Great Britain.

France. These mines at one period were conducted by the Jews, who rendered them so flourishing, that the reigning monarch (if I remember right it was Edward II.) banished them the kingdom from motives of suspicion, as a reward for their skill, labour, and success. In the days of Elizabeth several veins were discovered; and that great princess, with her accustomed wisdom, pursued a very different policy to that of Edward II., for, finding her crown mines had fallen into neglect, and that foreigners understood the mining art better than the English, she invited and allured them from Germany and elsewhere, by liberal offers of reward, to pass over sea and teach their craft to the miners of Devon. A cup weighing 137 ounces was presented to the City of London by Sir Francis Bulmer; it was formed from the silver of the Coombe-Martin mines in the north of our county.

My letter has extended to such a length that I must forbear to add more, reserving for some future opportunity what I may have to say, not only about our Dartmoor minerals, but also concerning certain vestiges of ancient customs still found to linger, though in decay, amongst the peasantry of the moor; and, though last not least, a word or two respecting the life and adventures of those merry little pixies and fays, which, though never seen, are here still averred to have a local habitation as well as a name, and to do all those various petty acts of mischief, which, in a family, or amongst domestics, in other counties, have, whenever inquiry is made respecting them, "Nobody" for their author: not so is it in Devon; our "Somebody" is never wanting; and as it is a being who can slip through a keyhole, sail on

a moon-beam, and, quite independent of all locks and bolts, enter closets and cupboards at will, we are never at a loss to hear who it is that pilfers sweatmeats, or cracks cups and saucers, to the annoyance of staid old housekeepers, who may think that both should be held sacred, and that tea-cups, like hearts, were never made to be broken.

Adieu, my dear Sir,
And believe me ever most respectfully
and sincerely yours,
A. E. BRAY.

LETTER IX.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS :—Account of the Circles of Stone near Merrivale Bridge—Walls, or Stone Hedges, how formed on the Moor—Account of forty contiguous Circles of Stone—Traditionary account and vulgar error respecting the Circles near Merrivale Bridge—Plague at Tavistock in the year 1625—Temporary appropriation of the Circles at that period to a Market gave rise to the error—Borlase quoted; his opinion of the Circular Temples of the Britons—Further account of the Great Cursus near Merrivale Bridge—Barrow—Cromlech—Kistvaen, or Sepulchral Stone Cavity—Origin of the word Cromlech—Borlase again quoted—Obelisk near the Cursus—Hessory Tor—View from it—Curious Rock on the summit of the Tor answers in every respect to a Druidical Seat of Judgment—Rundle's Stone.

Picarage, Tavistock, April 18th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

THIS evening, on looking over some notes made by my husband, at the time he first explored the western limits of Dartmoor, I find he notices, more particularly than I have done, the circles and cursus near Merrivale bridge. I think it will be better, therefore, before I enter on any other subject, to give you the following extract from his papers, as it will convey a more complete idea of those antiquities than you can have formed from my previous account of them.

“ October 7th, 1802.—This morning we paid a visit to the stone circles, which are about five miles from Tavistock, on the hill beyond Merrivale, or Merrivill, bridge, over the river Walkham. They

are on each side of the Moreton road, by which, indeed, two of them are intersected. The first (which, as well as many others, has been partly destroyed, in order to build a neighbouring stone hedge) is twenty feet in diameter. I here, perhaps, may be allowed to remark, that the hedges on Dartmoor are formed of stones piled on each other without any mortar, or even earth, to the height of about five feet. These walls are found better, in many respects, than any others; for, by admitting the winds through their interstices, they are not liable to be blown down by the storms which are here so tremendous; and, by being of so loose a texture, the cattle are afraid to come near, much more to break over them, for fear of their falling upon them.

“ Finding the circles were so numerous, I measured the remainder by the shorter method of pacing them. They consist in all of about forty: six being on the left side of the road, and the remainder on the other. The greater number of them are about eight paces in diameter, though one is sixty, in which are enclosed two or three small ones. This is about the centre of the whole. There are two or three of an oval form; many of them have two upright stones at the entrance, which is generally towards the south. The other stones are mostly placed on their edge, lengthways, and are frequently ranged in double rows. Within the largest circle is one of about eight paces, enclosing a much smaller, of which it forms a part. Close to it are some flat rocks, about a foot or two high. This was, perhaps, the central altar. Towards the north-east and south-west sides are two ill-defined circular lines of stone, which might probably be the circumvallation or boundary of the holy

precincts. Many of these circles have evidently been entirely destroyed for the sake of the stones. Foundations have been lately laid for two moor huts,* one of which will enclose a circle, and the other intersect one. Though they are generally about eight paces, a few are only three or four. Part of the spot chosen for these erections was a natural karn, or bed of stones; so that the greatest labour, perhaps, was clearing the ground. The areas of the circles are generally free from stones.

“The account given by tradition respecting these circles requires some notice here. I shall preface it with saying, that one of the four great plague years in London was 1625, in which about 35,000 of its inhabitants perished. And this is the year in which this fatal malady most raged at Tavistock. The burials in our register at that period amount to 522. On the following year they had decreased to 98; and on the preceding year (in the latter part of which it probably, in some degree, prevailed) they amounted but to 132; the very number, save one, that were buried in one month (namely September) in the year of this awful visitation. Of this, or a similar one, another memorial remains in these circles on Dartmoor, near Merrivale bridge (though they certainly are of far greater antiquity, and are either Druidical, or the vestiges of a Celtic town), for they are stated by tradition to be the enclosures in which, during the plague at Tavistock (that they might have no intercourse with its inhabitants), the country-people deposited the necessary supply of provisions, for which, within the same, the towns-people left their money.

* These, however, were never completed.

“That these circles may have been applied to this purpose is not improbable; particularly as the spot is still known (and, indeed, is so distinguished in some maps) by the name of the ‘Potato Market.’ Nor is it altogether improbable that it was during the plague in question. For the potato was first brought from Virginia by Sir Walter Raleigh (the contemporary, nay, fellow-soldier, of our great townsman, Sir Francis Drake, and himself also a native of Devonshire), ‘who, on his return homeward, in the year 1623, stopping at Ireland, distributed a number of potatoes in that kingdom. These having been planted multiplied accordingly; and in a few years the cultivation of them became general. It may be noticed that the discovery of this inestimable root has been of the greatest consequence to mankind, as it is now almost universally cultivated, though at first its introduction was very much opposed. It has been remarked that, with the greatest propriety, it may be denominated the *bread-root* of Great Britain and Ireland.’* Indeed by our neighbours, the French, it is called by a name, to which *earth-apple* would be synonymous in our own language.

“Nor is it, perhaps, to be wondered at, that the era of this cautious traffic should be no longer known, or almost as little remembered as the purposes to which these granite circles were originally applied. From our long immunity we have been induced to think that the plague was no more likely to return to us than the barbarous superstitions of our Celtic ancestors. But, of the sons of men, who shall say to the pestilence, ‘Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther?’

* Rees’s Cyclopædia.

“It is absurd to imagine that any circles would be formed of such vast stones solely for the purpose of a market during the time of the plague, though, being on the spot, they might have been so applied. If they were designed only to be boundaries to distinguish the property of different persons, a circular line or trench, on some spot free from stones, might have been formed with greater ease. It has been suggested by some, that these enclosures were made to defend the flocks from the wolves. This idea, though more specious at first, is equally objectionable; for, if this were the case, they must have been built to some height, and, at least, parts of the walls must have remained in an erect position, or the ruins have been still found below. But this is not the case; not one stone, in most instances, being on the top of another.

“It is natural to conclude, then, that, like the other vestiges on the moor, they must have been the works of the Britons or the Druids; and this last conclusion will presently be supported by some other remains found near them, and which (after mentioning the purposes to which Druidical circles were applied) I shall endeavour to describe. They may be considered as temples or places set apart by the Druids for the purposes of religion. Borlase considers that ‘some might be employed for the sacrifice, and to prepare, kill, examine, and burn the victims.’ ‘Others,’ he conjectures, ‘might be allotted to prayer;’ for the station of those selected as the victims, and some for the feastings of the priests. Thus, whilst one Druid was preparing the victim in one circle, another might be engaged in his devotions, or in ‘describing the limits of his temple, and a third be

going his round at the extremity of another circle of stones.' Nor is it unlikely that many other Druids were occupied in these mysterious evolutions. Some, perhaps, were busy in the rites of augury, and, at the same time, all employed, each in his proper place, in the ceremonials of idolatry, 'under the inspection of the high priests, who, by comparing and observing the indication of the whole, might judge of the will of the gods with the greater certainty.'

"The circles, above described, are on the slope of a hill. On the top of it, which spreads into a plain of some length, are two parallel double lines of stones, stretching south-west by north-east. The remains of a circle are at the commencement of one, where is also an erect stone. This line is 198 paces in length, at the end of which is a stone, now fallen, nine feet long. The stones that form the line are about two feet apart, and the same space exists between the two rows. From this to the opposite double line are thirty-six paces. The last is imperfectly extended to the length of seventy-four paces more; there are two stones, one erect, the other fallen. Returning from the point opposite the other, where is also a stone erect, after walking seventy-one paces, I came to a low circular mound which I conjecture is a barrow, with a kistvaen on the top of it. This I shall describe hereafter. From this circle, at the distance of forty-seven paces, I met with a large stone, which served as an index to a cromlech fourteen paces distant. Sixty-nine paces farther brought me to two large stones; and thirty paces from these I reached the end, where is a stone erect. Thus, including the additional line, this is 217 paces in length. To the other, which it here also somewhat

surpasses, are twenty-six paces; so that these lines of stone are ten paces nearer at the north-east end than they are at the other. But, considering the length, they may be looked upon as parallel. The area between, as well as the space without them, for some distance, is free from stones.

“For what purpose this avenue, or cursus, was used it is now impossible to determine; though the several adjacent remains, known to have been frequently erected by the Druids, are a strong confirmation of the opinion, that it must have been the work of one and the same people and period. This avenue, which was probably subservient to religion, might possibly have been appropriated for the sacred processions of the priests. It might be used, also, to bear the funeral pomp of their departed brethren, as by the side of the south-west end of it is seen a circular heap of stones sixty-five paces round. This was probably a barrow, or place of burial. From the end of this line at the south-west, at the distance of seventy-one paces, we found another barrow, mentioned above. It is in the centre of the two lines, and is twelve feet in diameter. In the middle of it is a hollow in the form of a diamond, or lozenge, which is undoubtedly a kistvaen, or sepulchral stone cavity. It was almost concealed with moss, but, with some difficulty, we dug to the depth of three feet; and, discovering nothing, thought it useless to dig farther, as, in appearance, we had reached the natural stratum, which was of a clayey substance, below the black peat. It is probable that nothing was deposited there but ashes.

“The cromlech which we afterwards visited is fallen, but bears evident signs of having been in an

erect position. This, also, is supposed to be a sepulchral monument. The word cromlech is derived from krum (crooked), and lèch (a flat stone); as it consists of a flat stone, generally of a gibbous or convex form, supported on other stones in an erect position.

“ Many are the opinions respecting cromlechs. Borlase says, ‘ that the use and intent of them was primarily to distinguish and do honour to the dead, and also to enclose the dead body, by placing the supporters and covering-stone, so as they should surround it on all sides.’ The quoit or covering-stone of this on the moor, one end of it being buried in the ground, is ten feet and a half long, six feet and a half wide, and one foot and a half thick. Under it are three or four stones now lying prostrate, but undoubtedly they formerly were in an erect position, as its supporters.

“ At some distance, towards the south of the parallel lines, is a circle of nine low stones, twelve paces in diameter, rising from the smooth surface of the ground. Near it is an erect stone ten feet and a half high. From its connexion with the circle it was probably placed there by the Druids, and might have been one of their idols. At some distance from the other end of the parallel lines we perceived some stone posts about five or six feet high, stretching in a line to the south-east, but having no connexion with what has been described. On going up to them we found on one side the letter ‘T,’ and on the other ‘A.’ On inquiring afterwards, we learnt that they served as guide-posts from Tavistock to Ashburton, before the turnpike-road was made over the moor.

“We next visited two tors to the south, but saw nothing worthy remark, and then turning to the east ascended Hessory Tor, which is six miles from Tavistock, and is reckoned the highest part of the forest. There we had a most extensive view in every direction. The sea was visible over the summits of the lofty tors towards the south and south-west. Towards the north-west, also, we thought we could distinguish it, as we perceived an horizon evidently too straight to be land. On the top of this tor is a curious rock, which, from its shape, I should be inclined to think was not unknown to the Druids. Its front, towards the south-east, was thirty-two feet. At the height of eight feet from the ground are two canopies, projecting nine feet. At the distance of eight feet is a kind of buttress, twenty in length, and four in height. It answers in every respect to the idea we entertain of a Druidical seat of judgment. Descending to the road we reached it near a high stone post, which is commonly called Rundell’s stone. This is considered as the boundary of the forest, and the letter B on the south side of it may refer to the limits of the moor.”

Having given you this extract from Mr. Bray’s papers, I forbear to add more to this letter, than that

I am, my dear Sir,

Ever faithfully yours,

ANNA E. BRAY.

LETTER X.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Bogs on the Moor, called Dartmoor Stables—Mists on the Moor, their density—Popular belief among the Peasantry of being *Pixy-led*—Fairies and Pixies of the Moor—Lines from Drayton—Fairies of older date in Britain than the times of the Crusaders, Duergar or Dwarf—Their origin by some attributed to the Lamiae—Fosbrook's Opinion quoted respecting their origin with the Nations of the North—Their peculiar Character—Druids supposed to worship Fairies—Derivation of the word *Pixy*—Pixies a distinct genus from Fairies—Said in Devon to be the Souls of Children who die unbaptized—The reputed Nature, Character, and Sports of Pixies—Traditionary Tales respecting them—A Pixy bribed with fine clothes—Said to change Children in the Cradle—Story of a Changeling—Pixy Houses, where found—Lines from Drayton's *Nymphidia*—Conrade and Phœbe, a Fairy Tale in verse, by the Rev. E. A. Bray, quoted—The wild waste of Dartmoor haunted by Spirits and Pixies—Causes assigned by the Peasantry for these Spirits not being so common as in former days—*Pixy-led* folk—Their distresses—Turning Jackets and Petticoats, a practice to prevent the disaster—A Tale of an Old Woman and the Pixies, very faithfully recorded, as handed down by Tradition to modern times—Another Tale, not less wonderful, concerning two Damsels—Legend of the Old Woman, the Tulip-bed, and the gratitude of Pixies.

Vicarage, Tavistock, April 24th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I BELIEVE I have not yet said much about our bogs on the moor, which, from some luckless horse or other being now and then lost in them, have obtained, as their popular name, that of the Dartmoor Stables. These bogs in old times must have been exceedingly formidable and perilous; since, to borrow an expression from the poetaster

who celebrated the roads of General Wade in the Highlands, I may truly say of the moor, "had you travelled its roads before they were made," you would have blessed the good fortune that enabled you to cross such a wilderness without being lost. For even now that we have a passage through it, which displays all the happy results of Mr. Mac Adam's genius, yet, nevertheless, if a mist suddenly comes on, the stranger feels no small apprehension for his own safety.

Mr. Bray assures me that when he used, in early life, to follow up with enthusiasm his researches on the moor, not heeding the weather, he has frequently been suddenly surprised and enveloped in such a dense mist, or rather cloud, that he literally could scarcely see the ears of the animal on which he rode. Once or twice he was in some peril by getting on boggy ground, when his horse, more terrified than himself, would shake and tremble in every joint, and become covered with foam, from the extreme agony of fear. If such adventures have now and then happened, even in these latter days, how far more frequently must they have occurred, when there was no regular road whatever across the moor! How often a traveller, if he escaped with life, must have wandered about for hours in such a wilderness, before he could fall into any known or beaten track, to lead him from his perils towards the adjacent town of Tavistock, or the villages with which it is surrounded!

I mention this because I think there cannot be a doubt that similar distresses gave rise to the popular belief still existing, not only on the moor, but throughout all this neighbourhood, that whenever a person loses his way he is neither more nor less than

“Pixy-led.” And as I wish to give you in this letter some little variety of subject, suppose we leave for a while the old Druids and their mystic circles, and say something about the fairies or pixies of the moor; though, as I shall presently state, and give my reasons for so doing, I consider the latter to be a distinct race of genii from the former. You are a poet, and have, therefore, no doubt a very friendly feeling towards those little pleasant elves that have supplied you with many a wild and fanciful dream of fairy land. You will listen, then, with good will to one who proposes, in this letter, to become the faithful historian of sundry freaks and adventures they are said to have played off in our neighbourhood, the remembrance of which, without such record, might become lost to posterity; and as fairies or pixies often do as much mischief in their supreme career as greater personages, I do not see why they should not claim some celebrity as well as other spirits of evil, who may have exhibited their achievements on a larger and more important scale. To borrow an expression from Drayton, that exquisite poet of fairy land (who, perhaps, is not inferior even to Shakspeare for the frolics of his Pigwiggin, in the *Nymphidia*), I would say that, as no historian has here been found to record the acts of our pixies, I, unworthy as I may be to accomplish the task, will, nevertheless, adventure it—

“For since no muse hath been so bold,
Or of the latter, or the old,
Their elvish secrets to unfold,
Which lie from other’s reading,
My active muse to light shall bring
The court of a proud fairy king,
And tell there of the revelling;
Jove prosper my proceeding.”

However, as I wish to model my historical records of the pixies on the very best examples, I shall bear in mind that it is usual in all grave histories, before reciting the heroic or other actions of individuals, to say something of the origin, rise and progress of the people to whom they belong. Thus, then, before I relate the frolics of

“ Hop and Mop, and Drop so clear,
Pip, and Trip, and Skip, that were
To Mab, their sovereign dear,
Her special maids of honour,”

it may not be amiss to tell what I have been able to glean about the accredited opinions and traditions concerning the fairy race in general, ere we come to particulars. And who knows but such a task may be more liberally rewarded than is usual with luckless authors, even by—

“ A bright silver tester fine
All dropt into my shoe.”

Dr. Percy gives it as his opinion that these “elves and demi-puppets” are of much older date in this country than the time of the crusaders, to whom some writers have referred their introduction on British ground. This opinion receives no small confirmation from the known credulity and numberless superstitions of the Anglo-Saxons. Amongst other wonders of the unseen world of spirits, they believed in the existence of a certain race of little devils, that were neither absolutely spirits nor men, called Duergar, or dwarfs; and to whose cunning and supernatural skill they attributed sundry petty acts of good or evil that far exceeded the power of man. They were considered so far to partake of

human nature, that their bodies were material, though so light and airy, that they could at will pass through any other created substance, and become indistinct and even invisible to the sight.

Some writers have affirmed that the fairies derive their origin from the lamiaë, whose province it was to steal and misuse new-born infants; and others class them with the fauns or sylvan deities of antiquity. And a very learned and meritorious author* considers that the superstition respecting fays is founded on the Abrunæ of the northern nations, *i.e.* their penates. Amongst the ancient Germans, he states, they were merely images made of the roots of the hardest plants, especially the mandragora. These little images were about six or seven inches or a foot high. They mostly represented females or Druidesses; and remind us of a child's doll of modern days. They were usually kept in a little box, and offered meat and drink by their possessors: occasionally they were taken out and consulted in the telling of fortunes; when, not improbably, being managed by some wire or machinery like the puppets that now delight childhood, they would bow their heads and raise their arms in answer to a question. These penates were considered as lucky for the household in which they had their abode; and they were held to have a marvellous power in the cure of diseases or pains.

The Druids are supposed to have worshipped fairies, amongst their many deities; and certain it is they are often mentioned by the most ancient Welsh

* The Rev. Thomas Dudley Fosbroke, in his excellent and laborious work, the "Encyclopædia of Antiquities," gives a very interesting account of the fairies of different nations.

bards, by whom they were called "the spirits of the hills." There can be no doubt that these little beings were considered as a race of genii by the northern nations as the Duergi or *pigmies*. May not this have given origin to the word *pixies*, the name by which they are to this day known in the west of England? Brand's derivation seems improbable.* The pixies are certainly a distinct race from the fairies; since, to this hour, the elders amongst the more knowing peasantry of Devon will invariably tell you (if you ask them what pixies really may be) that these native spirits are the souls of infants, who were so unhappy as to die before they had received the Christian rite of baptism.

These tiny elves are said to delight in solitary places, to love pleasant hills and pathless woods; or to disport themselves on the margins of rivers and mountain streams. Of all their amusements, dancing forms their chief delight; and this exercise they are said always to practise, like the Druids of old, in a circle or ring. Browne, our Tavistock poet, alludes to this custom, when he writes—

A pleasant mead,
Where fairies often did their measures tread,
Which in the meadows make such circles green.

These dainty beings, though represented as of exceeding beauty in their higher or aristocratic order, are nevertheless, in some instances, of strange, uncouth and fantastic figure and visage: though such natural deformity need give them very little

* He says, "I suspect pixy to be a corruption of *puckes*, which anciently signified little better than the devil, whence in Shakspeare the epithet of 'sweet' is given to Puck by way of qualification." Surely pixy is more like pigmy than "puckes."

uncasiness, since they are traditionally averred to possess the power of assuming various shapes at will ; a power of which Ariel exhibits a specimen, who, as well as being able to "ride on the curled clouds," to "flame amazement," and to mock and mislead the drunken Trinculo and his companions, could transform himself into a harpy, and clean off a banquet with his wings. But whatever changes the outward figure of fairies may undergo, they are, amongst themselves, as constant in their fashions as a Turk ; their dress never varies, it is always green.

Their love of dancing is not unaccompanied with that of music, though it is often of a nature somewhat different to those sounds which human ears are apt to consider harmonious. In Devonshire, that unlucky omen, the cricket's cry, is to them as animating and as well timed as the piercing notes of the fife, or the dulcet melody of rebec or flute, to mortals. The frogs sing their double bass, and the screech owl is to them like an aged and favoured minstrel piping in hall. The grasshopper, too, chirps with his merry note in the concert, and the humming bee plays "his hautbois" to their tripping on the green ; as the small stream, on whose banks they hold their sports, seems to share their hilarity, and talks and dances as well as they in emulation of the revelry ; whilst it shows through its crystal waters a gravelly bed as bright as burnished gold, the jewel-house of fairy land ; or else the pretty stream lies sparkling in the moonbeam, for no hour is so dear to pixy revels as that in which man sleeps, and the queen of night, who loves not his mortal gaze, becomes a watcher.

It is under the cold and chaste light of her beams,

or amidst the silent shadows of the dark rocks, where that light never penetrates, that on the moor the elfin king of the pixy race holds his high court of sovereignty and council. There each pixy receives his especial charge: some are sent, like the spirit Gathon of Cornwall, to work the will of his master in the mines; to show by sure signs where lies the richest lode; or sometimes to delude the unfortunate miner, who may not be in favour, with false fires, and to mock his toils, by startling him with sounds within the bed of the rocks, that seem to repeat, stroke for stroke, the fall of the hammer which he wields, whilst his labours are repaid by the worst ore in the vein; and then the elfin will mock his disappointment with a wild laugh, and so leave him to the silence and solitude of his own sad thoughts, and to those fears of a power more than natural, not the less apprehended, because it takes no certain or distinct form, and is liable to be regulated by so much wanton caprice. Other pixies are commissioned on better errands than these; since, nice in their own persons, for they are the avowed enemies of all sluts or idlers, they sally forth to see if the maidens do their duty with mop and broom; and if these cares are neglected—

“ To pinch the maids as blue as bilberry,
For Mab, fair queen, hates sluts and sluttery.”

The good dames in this part of the world are very particular in sweeping their houses before they go to bed, and they will frequently place a basin of water by the chimney nook, to accommodate the pixies, who are great lovers of water; and sometimes they requite the good deed by dropping a piece of money into the

basin. A young woman of our town, who declared she had received the reward of sixpence for a like service, told the circumstance to her gossips; but no sixpence ever came again; and it was generally believed the pixies had taken offence by her chattering, as they like not to have their deeds, good or evil, talked over by mortal tongues.

Many a pixy is sent out on works of mischief, to deceive the old nurses and steal away young children, or to do them harm. This is noticed by Ben Jonson in his "Masque of Queens."

"Under a cradle I did creep
By day; and, when the childe was a-sleepe
At night, I snck'd the breath; and rose
And pluck'd the nodding nurse by the nose."

Many, also, bent solely on mischief, are sent forth to lead poor travellers astray, to deceive them with those false lights called Will-o'-the-wisp, or to guide them a fine dance in trudging home through woods and waters, through bogs and quagmires, and every peril; or, as Robin Goodfellow says, to

"Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harms."

Others, who may be said to content themselves with a practical joke, and who love frolic more than mischief, will merely make sport by blowing out the candles on a sudden, or kissing the maids "with a smack," as they "shriek out who's this?" as the old poet writes, till their grandams come in, and lecture them for allowing unseemly freedoms with their bachelors. Some are dispatched to frolic or make noises in wells; and the more gentle and kindly of the race will spin flax and help their favourite damsels to do their work. I have heard a story about an old woman in this town,

who suspected she received assistance of the above nature, and one evening coming suddenly into the room, she spied a ragged little creature, who jumped out at the door. She thought she would try still further to win the services of her elfin friend; and so bought some smart new clothes, as big as those made for a doll. These pretty things she placed by the side of her wheel: the pixy returned and put them on; when clapping her tiny hands in joy, she was heard to exclaim these lines (for pixies are so poetical, they always talk in rhyme),—

Pixy fine, pixy gay,
Pixy now will run away.

And off she went; but the ungrateful little creature never spun for the poor old woman after.

The wicked and thievish elves, who are all said to be squint-eyed, are dispatched on the dreadful errand of changing children in the cradle. In such cases (so say our gossips in Devon) the pixies use the stolen child just as the mortal mother may happen to use the changeling dropped in its stead. I have been assured that mothers, who credited these idle tales, (and it must be allowed they are very poetical and amusing,) have been known sometimes to pin their children to their sides in order to secure them; though even this precaution has proved vain, so cunning are the elves. I heard a story not long ago, about a woman who lived and died in this town, and who most solemnly declared that her mother had a child that was changed by the pixies, whilst she, good dame, was busied in hanging out some linen to dry in her garden. She almost broke her heart on discovering the cheat, but took the greatest

care of the changeling; which so pleased the pixy mother, that some time after she returned the stolen child, who was ever after very lucky.

A pixy house (and presently I shall give an account of a grand one which Mr. Bray visited at Sheep's Tor) is often said to be in a rock: sometimes, however, a mole-hill is a palace for the elves; or a hollow nut, cracked by the "joiner squirrel," will contain the majesty of pixy land. And Drayton, who writes of these little poetical beings as if he were the chosen laureate of their race, thus describes their royal dwelling:

"The walls of spiders legs are made,
Well morticed and finely laid,
He was the master of his trade
It curiously that builded:
The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for a roof, instead of slats,
Is cover'd with the skins of bats,
With moonshine that are gilded."

And then for the royal equipage of fairy land we have the following beautiful description; which is so similar to that of Shakspeare's Queen Mab, that we are almost tempted to conclude, either that Drayton borrowed from Shakspeare, or our great dramatist from him: both, it will be recollected, wrote and died in the reign of James I.

"Her chariot ready straight is made,
Each thing therein is fitting laid,
That she by nothing might be staid,
For nought must be her letting:
Four nimble gnats the horses were,
Their harnesses of gossamere,
Fly Cranion, her charioteer,
Upon the coach-box getting.

Her chariot of a snail's fine shell,
 Which for the colours did excell,
 The fair Queen Mab becoming well.
 So lively was the limning;
 The seat the soft wool of the bee,
 The cover (gallantly to see)
 The wing of a pied butterflee,
 I trow, 'twas simple trimming!

The wheels composed of crickets' bones,
 And daintily made for the nonce,
 For fear of rattling on the stones,
 With thistle-down they shod it:
 For all her maidens much did fear
 If Oberon had chanced to hear
 That Mab his queen should have been there,
 He would not have abode it."

Her attendants are thus mounted:—

"Upon a grass-hopper they got,
 And what with amble and with trot,
 For hedge nor ditch they spared not,
 But after her they hie them;
 A cobweb over them they throw,
 To shield the wind if it should blow,
 Themselves they wisely could bestow,
 Lest any should espy them."

I know not how it is, but Drayton seems to have fallen into sad neglect; yet, let any one but open his fairy tale of *Pigwiggin*, and if he can close the book before reading it to an end, that man must have but little poetry in his soul. In the legend of the Owl, also, though somewhat tedious, perhaps, at the commencement, the terse and animated manner in which, in a few lines, he paints the character of the various birds, is such as White, the immortal author of "*Selborne*," would have fully appreciated, had he had the good luck to be acquainted with that poem.

Before I quit the subject of fairy verse, I cannot resist observing, that Mr. Bray, when a mere youth,

was so much delighted with the pixy lore of his native country, that he wrote some elfin tales; which, if I may be allowed to say so, would not have disgraced an older or more practised poet. He then had never seen the works of Drayton: but in one of the tales, called “Conrade and Phœbe” (which I would give here, but he says it is too long for my letter), I find the following description of a fairy car, that I think bears some resemblance to the *spirit* of Drayton, and, I feel assured, will not displease you. The elfin queen is about to transport Conrade, an unfortunate, but favoured mortal, to recover his lost mistress:—

“ Her iv'ry wand aloft she rears,
And sudden from the sky appears
A silver car in view;
By dragons drawn, whose scales were gold;
It lighten'd as their eyes they roll'd,
And through the ether flew.

With Conrade in the car she springs,
The dragons spread their radiant wings,
And, when she slacks the reins,
Swifter than lightning upward rise;
Then dart along the yielding skies,
And spurn the earthly plains.

Her train, as dew-drops of the morn,
Suspended on the flow'ry thorn,
Hang round the flying car;
Young Conrade, though he soar'd on high,
Still downward bent his wond'ring eye,
And view'd the earth afar.

As oft the eagle, 'mid the skies,
Below a timid dove espies,
And darts to seize his prey,
The dragons thus, at length, no more
With heads to heaven directed soar,
But earthward bend their way.”

However, I am digressing, and talking about Drayton and my husband, when I ought to be "telling about nothing but a real pisgie tale," as the children say here, when they sit round the fire and listen to the legends of their grandmothers. In collecting these anecdotes respecting the pixy race, I must acknowledge my obligations to Mary Colling, the amiable young woman whose little verses you so kindly noticed, and whose artless attempts have also been so favourably received by her friends and the public.* Mary, to oblige me, chatted with the village gossips, or listened to their long stories; and the information thus gained was no small addition to my own stock of traditions and tales "of the olden time." Some of these will be given in the course of my letters to Keswick, though a few I must hold back, because, having already commenced (though I know not if I shall ever find health sufficient to complete it) a series of tales of the west, *founded on tradition*, of which "Fitz of Fitzford" was the first, I must not spoil what little interest I may raise in any such works, by telling the leading point of the story beforehand; a custom which, though rendered popular by a great and successful example, injures, perhaps, the interest of what follows in the narrative. For this reason you will not have the legend of *Warleigh* in these letters, as I have finished my tale founded upon it, and hope when I get better to make some arrangements to enable me to send it to you in print; and I fear the legend of *Cotele* must be withheld for the same purpose. But as I presume not to encroach upon fairy land, all the pixy

* See *Fables and other Pieces in Verse*, by Mary Maria Colling; published by Longman and Co., London.

tales I can gather shall be at your service ; and here follow some of them.

It is reported that in days of yore, as well as in the present time, the wild waste of Dartmoor was much haunted by spirits and pixies in every direction ; and these frequently left their own especial domain to exercise their mischievous propensities and gambols even in the town of Tavistock itself, though it was then guarded by its stately abbey, well stocked with monks, who made war on the pixy race with " bell, book, and candle " on every opportunity. And it is also averred, that the devil (who, if not absolutely the father, is assuredly the ally of all mischief) gave the pixies his powerful aid in all matters of delusion ; and would sometimes carry his audacity so far as to encroach even upon the venerable precincts of the abbey grounds, always, however, carefully avoiding the holy water ; a thing which, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear to the toad in Paradise, would infallibly transform him from any outward seeming into his own proper shape and person. But of late years the good people here affirm (though I know not why they should do so, but as an historian I am bound to be faithful, and to give facts rather than comments), that, by means of the clergy being more learned than formerly, and the burial service being so much enlarged to what it was in other days, the spirits are more closely bound over to keep the peace, and the pixies are held tolerably fast, and conjured away to their own domains.

The pixies, however much they may have been deified by the Druids, or northern nations, were never, I believe, considered as saints in any Ca-

tholic calendar; though it is affirmed that they have so great a respect for a church that they never come near one. Some very good sort of people, calling themselves Christians, do the same even in these days: but whether it be from so respectful a motive, is perhaps somewhat questionable. Pixies, then, are said to congregate together, even by thousands, in some of those wild and desolate places where there is no church. Various are the stories told about these noted personages: amongst others, that in a field near Down-house, there is a pit which the pixies, not very long ago, appropriated for their ball-room. There, in the depth of night, the owl, who probably stood as watchman to the company, would hoot between whiles; and sounds, such as never came from mortal voice or touch, would float in the air, making "marvellous sweet music;" whilst the "elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves," would whirl in giddy round, making those "rings, whereof the ewe not bites," that have for ages puzzled the conjectures of the wisest and most grave philosophers, to account for them according to the natural order of things.

Whitchurch Down (a favourite ride with me and my pony; for it sometimes is a hard matter to get him into any other road,—but of his adventures and my own more hereafter) is said to be very famous for the peril there incurred, of being *pixy-led*: for there many an honest yeoman and stout farmer, especially if he should happen to take a cup too much, is very apt to lose his way; and whenever he does so, he will declare, and offer to take his Bible oath upon it, "That as sure as ever he's alive to tell it, whilst his head was running round like a mill-

wheel, he heard with his own ears they bits of pisgies, a laughing and a *tacking* their hands, all to see he led astray, and never able to find the right road, tho' he had travelled it scores of times long ago, by night or by day, as a body might tell." And many good old folks relate the same thing, and how pisgies delight to lead the aged a wandering about after dark.

But as most evils set men's wits to work to find out a remedy for them, even so have we found out ours in this part of the world against such provoking injuries. For whosoever finds himself or herself pixy-led, has nothing more to do than to turn jacket, petticoat, pocket, or apron inside out, and a pixy, who hates the sight of any impropriety in dress, cannot stand this; and off the imp goes, as if, according to the vulgar saying, he had been "sent packing with a flea in his ear." Now this turning of jackets, petticoats, &c., being found so good as a remedy, was, like a quack doctor's potion, held to be excellent as a preventive: and as some good mother may now and then be prevailed with to give her darling Doctor Such-a-one's panacea to keep off a disease before it makes its appearance, even so do our good old towns-folk practise this turning inside out, ere they venture on a walk after sun-down, near any suspected place, as a certain preventive against being led astray by a pixy. But pray listen to a tale that is as true (so at least I am assured), aye, as true as most tales that are told by gossips over the "yule clog," to make the neighbours merry or sad on a Christmas-eve.

Once upon a time there was, in this celebrated

town, a Dame Somebody, I do not know her name, and as she is a real character, I have no right to give her a fictitious one. All I with truth can say, is, that she was old, and nothing the worse for that; for age is, or ought to be, held in honour as the source of wisdom and experience. Now this good old woman lived not in vain, for she had passed her days in the useful capacity of a nurse; and as she approached the term of going out of the world herself, she was still useful in her generation, by helping others into it—she was, in fact, the *Sage-femme* of the village; for though I have the utmost dislike to mixing up French, or any foreign words, with the good, plain English of my native land, I here for once venture on a French expression, because it is, in certain particulars, considered as a refinement so much in fashion, that I must not venture to neglect it.

One night, about twelve o'clock in the morning, as the good folks say who tell this tale, Dame Somebody had just got comfortably into bed, when rap, rap, rap came on her cottage door, with such bold, loud, and continued noise, that there was a sound of authority in every individual knock. Startled and alarmed by the call, she arose from her bed, and soon learnt that the summons was a hasty one to bid her attend on a patient who needed her help. She opened her door; when the summoner appeared to be a strange, squint-eyed, little, ugly, old fellow, who had a look, as she said, very like a certain dark personage, who ought not at all times to be called by his proper name. Not at all prepossessed in favour of the errand by the visage of the messenger,

she nevertheless could not, or dared not resist the command to follow him straight, and attend upon "his wife."

"Thy wife!" thought the good dame: "Heaven forgive me; but as sure as I live I be going to the birth of a little divel." A large coal-black horse, with eyes like balls of fire, stood at the door. The ill-looking old fellow, without more ado, whisked her up on a high pillion in a minute, seated himself before her, and away went horse and riders, as if sailing through the air, rather than trotting on the ground. How Dame Somebody got to the place of her destination she could not tell; but it was a great relief to her fears when she found herself set down at the door of a neat cottage, saw a couple of tidy children, and remarked her patient to be a decent-looking woman, having all things about her fitting the time and the occasion.

A fine, bouncing babe soon made its appearance, who seemed very bold on its entry into life, for it gave the good dame a box on the ear, as, with the coaxing and cajolery of all good old nurses, she declared the "sweet little thing to be very like its father." The mother said nothing to this, but gave nurse a certain ointment with directions that she should "strike the child's eyes with it." Now you must know that this word *strike* in our Devonshire vocabulary, does not exactly mean to give a blow, but rather what is opposite, to rub, smooth down, or touch gently. The nurse performed her task, though she thought it an odd one: and as it is nothing new that old nurses are generally very curious, she wondered what it could be for; and thought that, as no doubt it was a good thing, she might just as

well try it upon her own eyes as well as those of the baby; so she made free to strike one of them by way of trial; when, O! ye powers of fairy land, what a change was there!

The neat, but homely cottage, and all who were in it, seemed all on a sudden to undergo a mighty transformation; some for the better, some for the worse. The new-made mother appeared as a beautiful lady attired in white; the babe was seen wrapped in swaddling clothes of a silvery gauze. It looked much prettier than before, but still maintained the elfish cast of the eye, like his redoubted father: whilst two or three children more had undergone a metamorphosis as uncouth as that recorded by Ovid when the Cercopians were transformed into apes. For there sat on either side the bed's head, a couple of little flat-nosed imps, who with "mops and mows," and with many a grimace and grin, were "busied to no end" in scratching their own polls, or in pulling the fairy lady's ears with their long and hairy paws.

The dame, who beheld all this, fearing she knew not what in the house of enchantment, got away as fast as she could, without saying one word about "striking" her own eye with the magic ointment, and what she had beheld in consequence of doing so.* The sour-looking old fellow once more handed her up on the coal-black horse, and sent her home in a *whip-sissa*. Now what a whip-sissa means is more than I can tell, though I consider myself to be tole-

* It has been the popular belief of all ages that no mortal can see a fairy without his eyes being rubbed with a magic ointment. Cornelius Agrippa, if I remember right, though it is long since I have seen his book, gives a very amusing receipt for compounding such a salve.

rably well acquainted with the tongues of this "West Countrie." It may mean, perhaps, "Whip, says he," in allusion to some gentle intimation being feelingly given by the rider to the horse's sides with a switch, that he should use the utmost dispatch; but my derivation of the word, like that of some better etymologists on difficult occasions, may be a little far fetched; I, therefore, leave the point to be settled by the learned. Certain it is, the old woman returned home much faster than she went. But mark the event.

On the next market-day, when she sallied forth to sell her eggs, who should she see but the same, wicked-looking old fellow, busied, like a rogue as he was, in pilfering sundry articles from stall to stall.

"O! ho!" thought the dame, "have I caught you, you old thief? But I'll let you see I could set master mayor and the two town constables on your back, if I chose to be telling." So up she went, and with that bold free sort of air, which persons, who have learnt secrets that ought not to be known, are apt to assume when they address any great rogue hitherto considered as a superior, she inquired carelessly after his wife and child, and hoped both were as well as could be expected.

"What!" exclaimed the old pixy thief, "do you see me to day?"

"See you! to be sure I do, as plain as I see the sun in the skies; and I see you are busy into the bargain."

"Do you so!" cried he: "Pray with which eye do you see all this?"

"With the right eye to be sure."

"The ointment! the ointment!" exclaimed the

old fellow: "take that for meddling with what did not belong to you—you shall see me no more."

He struck her eye as he spoke, and from that hour till the day of her death she was blind on the right side; thus dearly paying for having gratified an idle curiosity in the house of a pixy.

One or two stories more shall suffice for the present; for you know that queen of story-tellers, the great Scheherazade, always made it a point to hold something in reserve to disarm the wrath of the sultan in an hour of peril. And though I do not think there is so much danger of losing my head (and I certainly am not good enough to write without it), as there may be that you should lose your patience, yet I will even try once more which shall tire first, you in reading, or I in relating, in this letter, the very true and faithful history of all the wonders, both natural and supernatural, of our never-sufficiently-to-be-celebrated county and its pixies. And the following tale may somewhat remind you of a merry little rogue, who, if he was not immortal before, has certainly been rendered so by Shakespeare—Robin Goodfellow. It is not unlike one of his pranks.

Two serving damsels of this place declared, as an excuse, perhaps, for spending more money than they ought upon finery, that the pixies were very kind to them, and would often drop silver for their pleasure into a bucket of fair water, which they placed for the accommodation of those little beings every night, in the chimney corner, before they went to bed. Once, however, it was forgotten; and the pixies, finding themselves disappointed by an empty bucket, whisked up stairs to the maid's bed-room, popped through

the key-hole, and began in a very audible tone to exclaim against the laziness and neglect of the damsels.

One of them who lay awake, and heard all this, jogged her fellow-servant, and proposed getting up immediately to repair the fault of omission: but the lazy girl, who liked not being disturbed out of a comfortable nap, pettishly declared "that, for her part, she would not stir out of bed to please all the pixies in Devonshire." The good-humoured damsel, however, got up, filled the bucket, and was rewarded by a handful of silver pennies found in it the next morning. But, ere that time had arrived, what was her alarm, as she crept towards the bed, to hear all the elves in high and stern debate, consulting as to what punishment should be inflicted on the lazy lass who would not stir for their pleasure.

Some proposed "pinches, nips, and bobs," others to spoil her new cherry-coloured bonnet and ribands. One talked of sending her the tooth ache, another of giving her a red nose: but this last was voted a too severe and vindictive punishment for a pretty young woman. So, tempering mercy with justice, the pixies were kind enough to let her off with a lame leg, which was so to continue only for seven years, and was alone to be cured by a certain herb, growing on Dartmoor, whose long and learned and very difficult name the elfin judge pronounced in a high and audible voice. It was a name of seven syllables, seven being also the number of years decreed for the chastisement.

The good-natured maid, wishing to save her fellow damsel so long a suffering, tried with might and main to bear in mind the name of this potent herb. She

said it over and over again, tied a knot in her garter at every syllable, as a help to memory then very popular, and thought she had the word as sure as her own name; and very possibly felt much more anxious about retaining the one than the other. At length she dropt asleep, and did not wake till the morning. Now, whether her head might be like a sieve, that lets out as fast as it takes in, or if the over-exertion to remember might cause her to forget, cannot be determined; but certain it is, when she opened her eyes, she knew nothing at all about the matter, excepting that Molly was to go lame on her right leg for seven long years, unless a herb with a strange name could be got to cure her. And lame she went for nearly the whole of that period.

At length (it was about the end of the time), a merry, squint-eyed, queer-looking boy, started up one fine summer day, just as she went to pluck a mushroom, and came tumbling, head over heels, towards her. He insisted on striking her leg with a plant which he held in his hand. From that moment she got well; and lame Molly, as a reward for her patience in suffering, became the best dancer in the whole town at the celebrated festivities of May day on the green.

The following tale will be the last I shall send in this letter: it would afford, perhaps, a good subject for poetry.

Near a pixy field in this neighbourhood, there lived on a time an old woman who possessed a cottage and a very pretty garden, wherein she cultivated a most beautiful bed of tulips. The pixies, it is traditionally averred, so delighted in this spot, that they would carry their elfin babies thither, and sing them

to rest. Often, at the dead hour of the night, a sweet lullaby was heard, and strains of the most melodious music would float in the air, that seemed to owe their origin to no other musicians than the beautiful tulips themselves; and whilst these delicate flowers waved their heads to the evening breeze, it sometimes seemed as if they were marking time to their own singing. As soon as the elfin babies were lulled asleep by such melodies, the pixies would return to the neighbouring field, and there commence dancing, making those rings on the green, which showed, even to mortal eyes, what sort of gambols had occupied them during the night season.

At the first dawn of light, the watchful pixies once more sought the tulips, and, though still invisible, they could be heard kissing and caressing their babies. The tulips, thus favoured by a race of genii, retained their beauty much longer than any other flowers in the garden; whilst, though contrary to their nature, as the pixies breathed over them, they became as fragrant as roses; and so delighted at all this was the old woman who possessed the garden, that she never suffered a single tulip to be plucked from its stem.

At length, however, she died; and the heir who succeeded her destroyed the enchanted flowers, and converted the spot into a parsley bed, a circumstance which so disappointed and offended the pixies, that they caused it to wither away; and, indeed, for many years, nothing would grow in the beds of the whole garden. But these sprites, though eager in resenting an injury, were, like most warm spirits, equally capable of returning a benefit; and if they destroyed the product of the good old woman's garden, when it

had fallen into unworthy hands, they tended the bed that wrapped her clay with affectionate solicitude. For they were heard lamenting and singing sweet dirges around her grave; nor did they neglect to pay this mournful tribute to her memory every night before the moon was at the full; for then their high solemnity of dancing, singing, and rejoicing took place, to hail the queen of the night on completing her silver circle in the skies. No human hand ever tended the grave of the poor old woman, who had nurtured the tulip bed for the delight of these elfin creatures; but no rank weed was ever seen to grow upon it; the sod was ever green, and the prettiest flowers would spring up without sowing or planting, and so they continued to do till it was supposed the mortal body was reduced to its original dust.

And of pixy legends I now, methinks, have given you enough to prove that the people of this neighbourhood, in the lower ranks of life (from whose chit-chat all these were gleaned), possess, in no small degree, a poetical spirit for old tales. The upper, and more educated classes, hold such stories as unworthy notice; and many would laugh at me for having taken the trouble to collect and repeat them; but however wild and simple they may be, there is so much of poetry and imagination in them, that I feel convinced you will consider them worthy of being saved, by some written record, from that oblivion, to which, in a few years, they would otherwise be inevitably consigned.

I remain, my dear Sir,

very faithfully yours,

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

LETTER XI.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

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CONTENTS:—The danger of the sudden mists on Dartmoor—A letter mentioned, written on the subject by the late Mr. Edward Smith, who was enveloped in one on Mistor—Mr. E. Smith, a man of talents, very unfortunate—His family of old standing in the county—Character of his father—A sketch of him given—His children distinguished for talent—Edward, the youngest, the most gifted and least prudent—Some account of him—His early career—At sea—Returns—Goes to Wadham College—The peculiar powers of his mind stated—Determines to turn author—His first projected Work—His merits and defects as a writer—Some mention of celebrated persons who have commenced their career at various ages of their lives—The character and misfortunes of Edward Smith—His marriage—His children—His distresses—The death of his wife—Of his infant—Of his youngest child—Affecting circumstance at the grave on his attending the funeral—His own death at the age of twenty-seven—His letter, with his interesting account of his visit to Mistor.

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Vicarage, Tavistock, April 30th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I MENTIONED in my last letter the dense mists with which travellers were often in danger of being enveloped during their journey over Dartmoor, and that I had no doubt such mists occasioned those wanderings out of the right road, which gave rise to the popular belief of being *pixy led*. On looking over my husband's papers about the moor, I find a very interesting letter addressed to him, by the late Mr. Edward Smith of this town, a young man who

possessed considerable natural talents, and who once intended writing a history of his native place; for which (although I have never seen them) he made, as I am told, some interesting collections.

We well knew poor Smith, who died, I believe, of a broken heart; and whose sad sufferings and misfortunes were, in a great degree, the result of imprudence. But he is gone—there are many who have dwelt upon his errors and his faults, but let me, though I was not blind to these, rather here speak of his good qualities, for he had many. Ever since his death I have entertained a wish to pay some tribute of sympathy to his memory; and, now that he lies in an early grave, to ask for him, what he can no longer ask for himself, mercy from the world, for his errors, and that some charity be shown to one, who, in the midst of all his faults, had a heart capable of warm affections and sincere gratitude; feelings that never can exist where there is not at least a capability of virtue. Before I give you, therefore, a copy of Edward Smith's letter, (and it is the only one of his in our possession that would be likely to interest a third person,) I shall say something about him. His family, indeed, especially in two of its members, are deserving notice in the biography of this place; and though I mention him here, even if it be a little out of rule, it is not of much consequence, for you will read the letter with more interest when you know some few particulars respecting the deceased writer.

I have often heard him state that the Smiths of Tavistock were a very old family in the county of Devon, and, in some branch or other, related to the noble house of Edgcumbe. I also understood that

they had suffered the loss of property by espousing the cause of the unfortunate and injured Charles I. They sunk in the world, and became poor in consequence: but poverty from such a cause is as glorious to the descendants of an honourable family, as was the battered armour and ragged pennon to the knight banneret of old; who, when a certain new-made and new-cased votary of chivalry treated somewhat contemptuously the older knight's shabby appearance in the tournament at court, vouchsafed the silken aspirant no other answer than this:—"My arms and banner have seen the field of Agincourt!"

I do not know any minute particulars respecting this family at an early period: for little did I think when poor Smith told me, as we one day walked under the abbey walls in our garden, the few anecdotes here mentioned, that I should ever live to become his biographer! He was then not five and twenty years old, and full of health, spirit, and ambition. I remember well that he used to say his maternal grandfather had been the parish clerk of Tavistock. I believe it was one great object of his literary ambition (and who could blame him for it, had he lived to accomplish his views?) to show the world that he had still the spirit of his loyal ancestors within him, which had survived, in blood at least, their change of fortune.

So much had his family fallen, that his father for years was a barber of this place. I have heard he was a cheerful, sharp-witted man, sang an excellent comic song, and was both an amusing and original character: as, in fact, were many of the barbers of the old school. Barber Smith (for so was he called) by

all accounts was a clever, bustling fellow, who made a pleasant mode of telling news and collecting general intelligence a part of his business. His avocations brought him in contact with a vast variety of characters; and to entertain each customer, whilst he sat under the operation of having his chin lathered and shorne, or of his hair being curled, frizzed and powdered, was, with him, an important point: it enlarged his business—for he had a rival barber, whose name was Tristram or Trim Physic, who, as well as himself, was a very honest man—and his chit-chat made his little daily visits of necessity an agreeable occurrence with his various patrons; a thing nothing wonderful—as in the country, if gentlemen are not literary, they are apt sometimes to feel the hours hang on hand, especially when rainy weather interferes with their out-door amusements or sports.

The happy genius of Barber Smith made him, therefore, always welcome. The gouty old gentleman welcomed him as the man of news and information, who could give the current notions of the place in regard to the ministry and the affairs of the nation. The squire learnt from him the earliest report respecting what horses were to be entered to run for the cup at the next races. The doctor had the gratification to hear the generally received opinion of his own success and skill: and the clergyman heard how his Sunday's sermon went off, and what the dissenters were doing, as likely to raise themselves or oppose him in the parish. The justice had the satisfaction of hearing the last cause tried over again, as he submitted to the razor; and his own settlement of the case as confidently asserted,

as if confirmed by the twelve judges on the bench. The good mothers too had their share of the gossip, and heard all the chit-chat about their neighbours, as they seated their little boys on the high chair, and held a bowl-dish on their heads, that Barber Smith might snip round the brim, so as to leave not one stray hair longer or shorter than another.

In truth, the good man was welcome to all, the universal favourite. None thought him to be of consequence enough to eclipse themselves; and his wit and talents, being of the good-humoured sort, were admitted without envy. His presence brought cheerfulness, and inspired no restraint; and as the love of novelty is a very general passion, how could the folks do other than feel pleased with one who always carried with him a large stock of news? His vocal powers, too, made him very popular: I have often heard my husband say, that when a little boy, he was allowed to go into the long-room (at the great dinner of the court-leet given to the tenantry and freeholders by the Duke of Bedford) to hear with delight the comic songs of Barber Smith; who, in those days, was the very Mathews of Tavistock. This universal desire for his presence and conversation rendered the worthy man exceedingly good friends with himself; for, as it requires the very head of an ancient philosopher not to grow somewhat intoxicated with popular applause, I must say, from all I have heard, that Barber Smith was not a little vain and conceited. Yet I speak it of him in no disrespect; for he was, unquestionably, a person of worth in his station.

He died many years before I became an inhabitant of Tavistock; but I have no doubt of his merit:

for when I recollect that he had six sons—that the eldest of these so raised himself in the service of his country (he died a major of marines) as to receive the thanks of the House of Commons for his gallant and spirited conduct in quelling a mutiny; that Edward (the subject of this letter) struggled so far successfully through the world as to become a student at Wadham College, Oxford; that another brother, a dissenting minister, attempted and published a translation of some of the classics; that a fourth son, also a man of talent, became master of a grammar-school in Devon; that another has succeeded as a most respectable chemist; and the last brother is now, I believe, a thriving tradesman in London—I cannot help thinking the barber of a country town, whose children could thus raise themselves above the disadvantages of birth and station, must have been himself a man of more than ordinary merit; and that in his own person he set them the example of how much is to be done by industry and individual exertion. Edward, of all the brothers the most gifted, was the least prudent, and consequently the least fortunate. I regret I did not learn more minutely the particulars of his early life. I know he held some station in the navy; but as, when we first knew him, he was falling under that cloud which finally overshadowed all his prospects, we felt reluctance to make inquiries that would have occasioned, perhaps, much pain to satisfy them. All I can with truth say is, that his gallant brother, the major, (who dying suddenly at the inn here, chanced to pass the last evening of his mortal pilgrimage under our roof,) told me that poor Edward was, he believed, truly kind and feeling at heart,

but that he had been of a thoughtless, warm, and irritable temper; and, by some neglect of his minor duties, and those forms of discipline which are as necessary to be observed by the gifted as by the common mind, he had given offence to a superior, and had lost, in consequence, that golden opportunity which, when once forfeited by a young man in the outset of his career, seldom visits him again with the like prospect of success. The major spoke this with every charitable allowance for his brother; and regretted he had died before he could retrieve himself in the eye of the world.

He also told me that Edward Smith was for some short time at Wadham College. I conclude his finances did not suffer him to remain there long enough to profit much by his studies. He could hear of no situation; and as he had good talents, and was a respectable antiquary, he determined to turn author for his support. This determination made him seek the acquaintance and notice of Mr. Bray, who received him with every kindness, and did what he could to forward and assist his pursuits; and Edward Smith ever returned his kindness with the utmost gratitude and respect. He thought of making his first work a history of the antiquities of Tavistock: it was proposed to dedicate it to the Duke of Bedford, and to publish it by subscription. Many names were obtained in its support.

At that time he was frequently at the Vicarage; and we never saw him without having cause to remark the lively and acute powers of his mind. He was (what all authors ought to be) a great reader; and he read aloud with peculiar feeling and energy. He had a strong memory, reflected on

what he read, and possessed so clear an arrangement of the knowledge he thus gained, that he could always apply it with effect. He had been much abroad, and could give a very interesting account of what he had observed in his wanderings. The specimen I shall here send you of his writing is one of the best I have ever seen from his pen. Its merit, I am inclined to think, arises from its *not having been written for publication*; for Smith, as a young author, fell into a common error, which time and a good critic would have cured—he thought it necessary to write for the public press in a different manner to that he would have adopted if writing for a private or familiar reader; the consequence was, (at least in the little I ever heard him read of what he wrote,) that his style was somewhat inflated and affected, though he knew how to choose his matter well enough. I mention this in no disparagement of his merit. Many writers of talent, especially in the present day, have wilfully steered for the same rock instead of avoiding it; and many, calling themselves critics, have been too unskilful to point out the danger to those whom they think themselves fully competent to guide. To say whether the talents of Smith (which were most conspicuous in conversation) would, or would not, have produced any lasting fruits as an author, is now impossible to decide. He had certainly strong and original powers of thinking and expression; but he died before any work was completed or published. We see in the very highest order of writers, that excellence in composition shows itself at very different and unequal periods. Chatterton, that “marvellous boy,” produced his extraordinary works and died

before he was twenty. Young, on the contrary, did not produce his "Night Thoughts" till he was turned of sixty. Richardson (if my memory is faithful) was about that age when he wrote his first novel. Miss Fanny Kemble has written a powerful tragedy at eighteen; Swift never wrote at all till he was four and thirty; and Pope produced his best work (for so Johnson considers his "Essay on Criticism") when he was twenty. To say, therefore, what a person possessed of superior talents may or may not achieve, if he be cut off in his youth, is impossible.

Such were the misfortunes, perhaps I may add the imprudence of Smith, that the necessities of to-day interfered with the prospects of to-morrow. He was obliged to solicit some of his subscriptions before the work could be committed to the press; and living on what he received, he could never find means to set the engravers and printers upon their task, for his work was not of that nature to secure publication on the bookseller's risk. The Duke of Bedford, I know, kindly sent him thirty pounds in the hope to forward it; his brothers, especially the major, gave him frequent assistance; Mr. John Carpenter, of Mount Tavy, was, to the last, his generous benefactor; and he had other friends who did what they could to relieve him.

But to live entirely on soliciting and receiving the casual help of friends is neither wholesome for the moral nor the intellectual character; it blunts the best feelings of a man, by sinking in him the honest pride of independence, which is as the safeguard of honour; it sours and irritates the temper (especially in a mind conscious of superior talents), and makes

the dependent acutely alive to every petty pain, so that he is on the watch to take offence. A word is often misconstrued, and received as a reproach to his necessities, when it is only intended as a warning to his imprudence: whilst, fearful of losing one atom of that respect which is due to the powers of his mind, he is apt sometimes to lay claim to it with a high hand; and the world, like most givers, is inclined to withhold from a demand, what it would freely bestow, if left to itself, as a tribute paid to merit, but not on compulsion.

Poor Smith suffered in every way by his early imprudence; since, to add to his distresses, he married a young woman of this place, who, like himself, had nothing. And two children brought with them an accession to their father's anxieties, and such an additional call on the assistance of his relatives and friends, that none could sufficiently help him, so as to set him free from his accumulated necessities. His poverty, likewise, had compelled him at times to receive some trifling countenance or assistance from little and vulgar minds; and as to persons of this description superiority is an offence, they enjoyed the petty triumph of making the man of talent feel, in his distress, that it was *their* turn to be superior. I once heard poor Smith truly say (and I believe almost the same thing was spoken by Savage in his adversity), "that a guinea subscription to his book gave no man a right to insult him, or to force upon him dictation and advice when unsought for;" the advice, too, being often given more to show consequence in the adviser than to benefit the object of it. This led to warfare; and Smith was of a temper, like that seen in some wild creatures in the animal world,

where a blow will raise their fury, rather than tame their spirit; so that he retorted angrily, instead of attempting by mildness to turn away wrath.

Misery, also, had been to him like the hair shirt to the religionist of Rome; not a wound to kill, but a fretting and irritating suffering. It affected his temper, and made him take up imprudent arms in his own cause; for the slightest contempt he returned with bitterness. This bitter invective I believe was often deserved by his enemies: it was therefore the more keenly felt and resented; and those who triumphed over a superior mind because that mind was in misery, soon found they had nothing to fear; for the poor are generally the powerless. For my own part, I could never think of Smith, in his last struggles with the world, without being strongly reminded of the poet Savage, whose life, from the pen of Johnson, none but a heart of stone could read unmoved. Savage lived to raise a great name as an author; Smith died before his abilities produced any lasting memorial of *his* name: but both have left an example, the one in public, the other in private life, that (to use the words of the admirable biographer of the poet) "no superior capacity or attainments can supply the place of want of prudence; and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, render even knowledge itself useless, and genius contemptible."

So far truth, for the sake of others, obliged even the enlarged charity of Johnson—a charity, that, like his piety and life, did honour to human nature—to declare of Savage, whom he pitied and regarded in the midst of all his errors. But Johnson had that discrimination as well as goodness which could de-

teet the germ of virtuous feelings amidst the wildest growth that may be found in the sluggard's garden of folly and of vice. The naturalist, in the darkest night, will pause to look with pleasure on the solitary ray of light emitted by the little glow-worm as it lies on the lowly turf: the great moralist did the same—one spark of good never escaped his searching eye. So may it be with all (however inferior their powers or their capacity) who attempt to record the character of the dead. For the example of the living, for the honour due to God, for the just demands of truth, no vice should be ever sophisticated into a virtue; for such is but “seeming.” But where human frailty (the consequence more of imprudence than a wicked heart) produces distress; where that frailty has been exposed to suffer increase by the manifold temptations of poverty and want, *there*, (in the name of Him who was all mercy, who took on himself the lowest estate to show an example of long suffering to the poor,) *there* let charity be extended in the most enlarged degree. May such a consideration (and it has truly guided me in this slight and imperfect sketch of the character of poor Edward Smith) weigh with all who judged him harshly in life, and have not spared him even in the grave. A few lines more will show what hastened him to where he indeed has wearily sunk to rest.

After having given birth to two children, Smith's wife, whose health was delicate, fell into a decline. During the early part of her illness, as she and her husband were one day playing with the elder infant, at the very moment it was in the father's arms, and smiling in his face, it suddenly and instantaneously expired. The shock increased Mrs. Smith's illness;

it was soon pronounced fatal; and I have heard distress of mind helped to bring on her first indisposition. Life became to her a long and lingering disease; for youth and nature struggled hard with her decay. And now the amiable part of poor Edward Smith's character shewed itself in the most marked manner—he devoted himself to her comfort, with the zeal of the most ardent affection. All he had (so I have learned since his death), even to his books, (and what a sacrifice was that to him!) were sold one by one, to procure her every relief. He never left her by day, and at night he would watch by her sick-bed with all the tenderness of the most anxious care. So ill was she, yet so painfully did she linger on, that I have been assured, for some weeks before her death, he never enjoyed one night's undisturbed repose. I have also heard that he had drawn so continually on the bounty of his friends, that he concealed his extreme wants at the very hour when relief was most needed.

At length his wife died; and left him with the youngest helpless infant. It was affecting to hear how the poor father, on the day of her death, would take the child in his arms, endeavouring to recall the living image of its mother by looking in its face; unconscious as it was of the widowed grief and the desolation of that father's heart. He was relieved of this care; for, as the child was so very young, a relation of the mother took it home. I have again but this day heard, from one who was nearly connected with him, the account of the deep melancholy that settled on his mind from the hour of his wife's death. He frequently visited her grave, and gave himself up to such a state of despondency during those visits, that,

at length, a friend would watch him, and follow after to draw him from the spot. For some little time, however, he endeavoured to rally his spirits; and being universally pitied, he was not deserted in his misery; though he now shunned observation, and even kindness, as much as he could. But the earthly cup of sorrow, of whose bitterness he had tasted even at its brim, was not yet drained to the very dregs—there was yet a draught in store for him. His last child died; and that he followed to the grave. Well might he say of death, as did the melancholy poet of the night,

Insatiate archér ! could not one suffice?

Thy shaft flew thrice; and thrice my peace was slain!

It is the custom in this town, for young women clothed in white, with a handkerchief drawn through the coffin rings (underhand, as it is called), to act as bearers at a child's funeral. A young person, who assisted in performing this office at the burial of poor Smith's infant, gave me a very interesting account of his demeanour on that sad day. He attended the funeral, though all present were shocked to observe his altered appearance. His eye, that had, in other and happier days, possessed uncommon brightness and vivacity, was now sunk in his head—it was dim and downcast. He was very pale and thin; and all energy and spirit seemed dead within him. For some time he stood over the grave, after the ceremony was concluded, in silence, contemplating that earth which was about to close on all the nearest and dearest of his affections. The young person who gave me this account was his school-fellow in their infant days; and had been well known to his deceased wife. From long habits of acquaintance, she

ventured to speak to him, even in these moments, some words of sympathy. She held out her hand as she did so. He took it, grasped it, and looked at her with an expression of such heart-rending distress, as, she said, she should never forget; but tears rose in his eyes, and looking once more on the grave, he said—"It will yet hold another!"

Soon, indeed, was that other numbered with the dead already gone before; for the blow had been struck that to him, I doubt not, in the end, was one of mercy. Not long after, he was seized with a fever, the consequence of his recent sorrows and the long-continued anxiety of his distresses. At first, hopes were entertained of his recovery; but delirium came on, and all was soon over: for, on the 1st of January, 1827, he expired, in the 27th year of his age. He was buried in the churchyard of his native town of Tavistock. Since then, his amiable and gallant brother has been laid to rest in the same ground; and I, who, excepting my husband, was the last friend with whom he conversed but a few hours before his death, purpose, in some future letter, to give a brief account of his life, and to pay a tribute of respect to his memory.

I here give you the extract from Mr. Edward Smith's letter, addressed to my husband in 1823.

"On Tuesday, the 11th of August, about twelve o'clock, I set out on a fishing excursion, to the river Walkham, above Merrivale bridge. This part of that romantic river is situated entirely on Dartmoor. As soon as I reached the high lands under Coxtor, my walk became highly interesting, from the peculiar state of the weather: being one instant enveloped in a blaze of light from an unclouded August sun,

and almost in the next shrouded in an impervious fog.

“The weather, however, was favourable for fishing, and reaching Merrivale Hamlet about half after one, I commenced; the sport excellent—but having promised to meet some friends at Prince Town to dinner at five, I shut up my rod as soon as I had reached the western foot of that immense hill, called, I believe, Mistor, whose eastern base conjoins with Rundle stone. At this spot I was probably about a mile or mile and a half (following the rough and sinuous course of the river) above Merrivale bridge. An idea struck me that ere I could reach across the hill towards Prince Town, I might be caught in a fog, but with a carelessness which I subsequently lamented, I determined on risking it. Up the mountain, therefore, I stretched, but scarcely had I reached a quarter of a mile, ere a cloud, dense, and dark, and flaky, fell, as it were, instantly upon me. So sudden was the envelopment, that it startled me. On every side appeared whirling masses of mist, of so thick a consistency, that it affected my very respiration. I paused; but impelled by some of those ill-defined feelings which lead men to action, they know not why, I determined to proceed—indeed, I fancied it would be impossible I could err in describing a straight line over the summit of the hill; but in this I was sufficiently deceived.

“I stretched on, and the way seemed to lengthen before me. At last I descried a few of those immense fragments of granite with which the summit was strewn. Their appearance, through the illusive medium of the fog, was wonderfully grand, wavy, fantastic, and as if possessing life. Although all

plane with the surface, such was the optical deception, they appeared upright, each in succession perpendicular—until I should arrive so close, that it required almost the very touch to prove the deception. There were, also, some scattered sheep, one here and there. At the distance of twenty or thirty yards, for I am sure I could distinguish nothing farther, they had the appearance of a moving unshapen mass, infinitely larger than reality. Every now and then, too, one of these animals would start from the side of a block of granite close to my feet, affrighted—sometimes with a screaming bleat, as if, like myself, filled with surprise and awe.

“Arrived now, as I considered, on the summit, I stood still and looked around—the scene was like one of those darkly remembered dreams which illness, produced by lassitude and grief, sometimes afflicts us with—an obscure sense of a scene where we have been darkly wandering on. There was above, beneath, and all around me, a mass, flaky, and at times even rushing, of white fog—there is no colour by which it could be named—a sombre whiteness—a darkness palpable and yet impalpable—that scriptural expression best suits it, ‘the very light was darkness.’

“I bent my course onward: now amongst massy fragments of granite, the playthings of the deluge, and now amongst bogs and rushes. I became impatient to catch some object familiar to me. I quickened my pace; but the farther I proceeded, the more and more did the fog bewilder me. My eye-sight became affected, my very brain began to whirl, till at length I sat down from sheer incapability to walk on.

“My situation was now painful, the evening was rapidly approaching—the fog increased in murkiness, and all hopes that it would clear away had vanished. I looked around for some large fragment of stone, under shelter of which to take up my quarters for the night. I had from exertion been hot even to excess, I was now shivering and chilled. At length the idea of maternal anxiety relative to where I might be struck me, and I determined once more to advance. Reflecting, from the boggy nature of the ground I now trod, I had perhaps gone on towards the north, I turned directly to the left and went swiftly forward. The ground now began to incline, and I suddenly found myself descending a steep acclivity—presently I heard the distant rushing of water; I stopped to calculate where it could be. At length I concluded my former conjecture right, and that I had been all this while toiling in a northerly instead of an easterly direction from the mountain’s summit, and that I was approaching a stream called Blackabrook. The sound, however, enlivened me; it was like the voice of a conductor, a friend, and I pressed onward; the descent, however, was still steep, very steep, and this destroyed again the conjecture which I lately thought sure: still I pressed on—when suddenly, so instantaneously that I can compare it to nothing save the lifting of a veil, the fog rushed from me, and the scene which opened induced me almost to doubt my senses. At my feet the river Walkham brawled amongst the rocks scattered throughout its bed—at my left was just sufficient of Merrivale open to show the eastern arch of its picturesque bridge, whilst in the distance the fantastic rocks of Vixen Tor were still wreathed in mist. At my right, within two or

three hundred yards, was the very spot I had first quitted to ascend the mountain; and in my front that grand tor at the back of Merrivale Hamlet rose frowningly dark, its topmost ridges embosomed in clouds, whose summits were gilded by the broad sun, now rapidly descending behind them.

“The whole scene was like magic—even whilst looking on it, it appeared to me a dream. I doubted its reality—I could not imagine, toiling up, then across the summit, then down the sides of a rugged mountain, how it was possible I could have returned to a spot *from whence* I even then felt almost sure I had been continually receding. I had, moreover, been full two hours and a half in progress, but still the stubborn certainty was before me.

“I had actually walked up the mountain, taken a complete circuit of its summit, and almost retraced my steps down to the spot I first quitted.

“In an instant the fog enveloped me again—by this time I had purchased experience. I therefore quickly regained the banks of the river, traced its stream, reached Merrivale bridge, and on once more placing my foot on the beaten road, determined never again to try the experiment of finding my way across a trackless Dartmoor mountain when the clouds were low about it.”

So concludes poor Smith’s letter to Mr. Bray. I will not now add more than the assurance that

I am, my dear Sir,

Ever faithfully yours,

A. E. BRAY.

LETTER XII.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Visit to Vixen Tor—The Tor formed of three contiguous lofty rocks—Different appearances of the rock in different situations—These and the Tor described—Difficult of ascent—Rock basins on its summit—Their probable uses—Borlase quoted—Logan stones—Second visit to Vixen Tor some years after the first—Further observations on that remarkable rock—Ascent made in 1831 by a friend of the writer.

Vicarage, Tavistock, May 2nd, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I SEND you in this Mr. Bray's account of a visit to Vixen Tor, extracted from his Journal of 1801.

“On the 17th of September, accompanied by a friend, I left Tavistock early in the morning, with the intention of spending the day in viewing some of the neighbouring tors of Dartmoor. As we approached the first, Coxtor, we found its head covered with mist; but as the horizon was clear behind us, we concluded it was only a partial collection of vapours, so frequently attracted by the lofty eminences of the forest,* and expected that the wind, which was very high, would soon dissipate them. However, on proceeding, we found it was a wet mist,

* Though the whole of this uncultivated tract of country, from Coxtor, which is about three miles from Tavistock, is generally called Dartmoor, the forest itself does not begin till we arrive at the distance of six miles; the intermediate parts being considered as commons belonging to the different neighbouring parishes.

which soon spread over the country, and prevented us from seeing more than a few feet before us.

“ Before the turnpike road was made over the moor, those who acted even as guides frequently lost their way on this almost trackless desert, through the sudden diffusion of the mist. When this was the case, they generally wandered about in quest of some river, as, by following the course of it, they were sure at last of finding an exit to their inhospitable labyrinth.

“ Since Coxton, we understood, was principally entitled to attention for the extensive prospect it afforded, we knew it would be fruitless now to ascend it, and having determined to relinquish the design of visiting the tors in regular succession, proceeded to Vixen Tor, for the purpose of climbing to the top of that lofty rock. My friend had formerly effected it; and the information he gave me of having found an excavation or circular hollow on its very summit, which coincided with the idea I had formed of a Druidical basin, powerfully excited my wish to accomplish it.

“ Vixen Tor presents itself to the eye from the road leading from Tavistock to Moreton in a picturesque and striking manner. Three contiguous lofty rocks raise themselves from the middle of a spacious plain, and, at different points of view, assume a vast variety of fantastic appearances. Sometimes you may fancy it bears a resemblance to a lion's head, at others to the bust of a man; and when seen from the Moreton road, it greatly resembles the Sphinx in the plains of Egypt,* whilst the mountains beyond may give no bad idea of the pyramids around it.

* Mr. Burt, in his Notes on Carrington's Dartmoor, published more



Vixen Tor, as seen from the Moreton road, in the view resembling the Sphinx.

Ridiculous as it may appear, I can never view it from one particular point, without thinking on the convenient but grotesque mode of riding on horseback, which is, I believe, more generally practised in the West of England than in any other part of the kingdom, called riding double. A horse that carries double is esteemed as valuable in this part of the world, as, in any other, may be one that serves in the two-fold capacity of a hackney and a draft horse. In addition to its convenience, no person will deny that it is a sociable method of riding, when he is informed, that the gallant may thus accommodate his fair one by taking her an airing *en croupe* on a pillion behind him. Some ladies, who are not afraid of singularity, will occasionally squire one another, when they are in want of a beau: and this is called riding jollifant.

“From the sketch I have made of Vixen Tor in this whimsical view, an opinion may be formed whether I have any excuse for entertaining such a fancied resemblance. The gentleman, who has a cocked

Up twenty years after this account was written, also compares Vixen Tor to the Sphinx of Egypt.

hat on his head, is rather short, but sufficiently prominent in front. The lady, too, is rather of a corpulent size, and proudly overlooks her husband; her cloak, however, may be supposed to be somewhat expanded by the wind; whilst her head is sheltered with a calash. Even the head of the horse and the handle of the pillion behind may be distinguished with no greater stretch of fancy.

“In addition to this, it cannot fail to attract the traveller’s eye as being the focus (if I may be allowed the expression) or principal object of a grand and beautifully varied view. Before it is the rugged foreground of the moor, rough with stones and heath; beside it is a deep valley, where flows the river Walkham; around it are a number of hills, all verging to, or meeting in, this point, whilst, on one of them, the tower of Walkhampton conspicuously elevates itself; and, behind the whole, is a distant view of Plymouth Sound with the woody eminence of Mount Edgumbe. On the south-west it is much increased in its appearance of height by the abrupt declivity of the ground. It here seems an immense ridge of rocks, on which stand three lofty piles in an almost perpendicular elevation. At the foot of this ridge are some curiously-shaped masses of rock, one of which projects for several feet in a horizontal direction.

“On the opposite side there is a perpendicular fissure, which we found large enough to admit us, and attempted to climb through it to the top of the loftiest pile; but the wind was so violent and hurried itself with such impetuosity up the narrow passage that we at length gave up the attempt, but not till our eyes were filled with dust and noise. The noise occasioned by it was at times tremendous, and

with our change of situation, from the dashing of a cataract to the soft whispers of the breeze.

“A rock to the north-west afterwards attracted our attention, which, from its fancied resemblance to the form of that animal, we called the tortoise. At its northern end there is a projection of three feet, which forms the head of the Tortoise. Under it the green turf is enclosed with three stones; and this enclosure, from its wearing the appearance of art, first gave us the idea of its having been appropriated to the uses of Druidical superstition; probably as a hearth, or receptacle for burnt offering.

“Determining thoroughly to examine this rock, I climbed to the top, which is formed by a large flat stone, eleven feet from north to south, and nine from east to west, divided about the middle by a fissure. We discovered on the southern division the ill-defined vestiges of four basins, in which was some rain water, uniting with one another in a transverse direction. A little channel, or dipping-place, communicated with the southern extremity of the rock. On the other half, a thorn bush was growing on a tuft of mould, rising about three or four inches from the surface.

“By observing a little circular hollow at one end of it, I was induced to push in my stick, and though it met with resistance, I found it was not from stone. It occurred to us, therefore, that there might be a hollow beneath, and we began with our sticks to dig into the mould, which was of as firm a texture, being the decomposition of decayed vegetable substances as the ground below. Indeed, it was of the black colour as the peaty soil of the whole, which shows evident signs of its vegetable

origin. On loosening the mould, we gradually discovered that our conjecture was well founded.

We were more than an hour engaged in this undertaking; and, for want of better instruments, my friend sat down and made use of his heels in kicking away the earth. Whilst thus employed, I was astonished to find that, with every blow, the half of the stone on which he sat, though it was of such large dimensions, shook, and was followed by a sound occasioned by its collision with the rock below. Having at length removed all the earth, we discovered two regularly shaped basins, communicating with each other, whilst a natural fissure served for the dripping place. The length of the largest was three feet, width two, and depth eight inches. The smallest was only two feet long.



I have no doubt but these basins have been

covered with earth for centuries ; as, in no shorter space of time, could moss or other vegetable substances be converted into so firm a mould. Indeed, from other rocks near it, we stript off the moss, though five or six inches thick, with perfect ease, and found it of a texture almost as tough as a mat, but without any particle of earth. That the earth could not be placed in this cavity by the hands of man, or deposited there by the wind, is, I think, pretty certain ; as, at the bottom of the whole, we found a thin coat of intertwisted fibres, which, though stained of a black colour above, by the earth, was white beneath, and kept the rock perfectly clean. The thorn bush likewise, which, in so exposed a situation, would not grow unless it had met with perfectly-formed earth, and then would not have attained any size till after a long period of years, indicates that the basin has not been exposed for ages to the eye of day.

It will not, I hope, be deemed a useless digression, to mention what is supposed to have been the use of these rock basins. Borlase, in his *Antiquities of Cornwall*, informs us, that they were designed to contain rain or snow water, which is allowed to be the purest. This the Druids probably used as holy-water for lustrations. They preferred the highest places for these receptacles, as the rain water is purer the farther it is removed from the ground. Its being nearer the heavens, also, may have contributed not a little to the sanctity in which it was held. The officiating Druid might have stood on these eminences and sanctified the congregation by this more than ordinary lustration before he prayed or gave forth his oracles. "The priest, too," says Borlase, "might judge by the quantity, colour, mo-

tion, and other appearances in the water of future events, and dubious cases, without contradiction from the people below." "By the motion of the logan stone the water might be so agitated, as to delude the inquirer by a pretended miracle, and might make the criminal confess, satisfy the credulous, bring forth the gold of the rich, and make the injured, rich as well as poor, acquiesce in what the Druids thought proper."

A logan signifies in Cornish a shaking rock. That the rock we visited is of this description, I hesitate not to affirm, as it was still capable of being moved, though the fissure was almost filled up with stones, some of which we with difficulty removed by means of a crooked stick. "It is probable the Druids made the people believe, that they only, by their miraculous powers, could move these logan rocks, and by this pretended miracle condemned or acquitted the accused, and often brought criminals to confess, what would in no other way be extorted from them." It is possible they encouraged the idea "that spirits inhabited them, and this motion they might insist on as a proof of it, and thus they became idols." The Druids by placing even a pebble in a particular direction might render unavailing the attempts of others to move the rock, and, by taking it away and moving the immense mass with apparent ease themselves, convince them of their superior powers.

On a rock at a little distance we discovered another basin, with a lip or dripping place to the south-west of a complete oval form, two feet and a half in length, and one foot nine inches in width. The depth of it was about six inches; we found in it some rain water that seemed remarkably cold to the touch.

On our return we visited several other rocks, but met with nothing worthy of remark, excepting some fine views of the vale through which flows the river Walkham, and some distant reaches of the river Tamar.

SECOND VISIT TO VIXEN TOR.

EXTRACTED ALSO FROM MR. BRAY'S JOURNAL.

“October the 3d.—We left Tavistock early in the morning with the intention of climbing to the top of Vixen tor, and afterwards inspecting Mistor.

“We ascended the former on the north-east side, through a fissure of about two feet in width, made by a division between two of the piles. We reached with difficulty (for it was like climbing up a chimney) the top of the lowest rock, where we sat for some time to rest ourselves. From this, with a wide stride, we got a footing on the other, and at length attained the summit.

“The uppermost rock is divided into two or three masses, on parts of which we found moss and green turf, which, though damp with the dew, afforded us a seat. Facing the east are three basins. One four feet long, three feet two inches wide, and eight inches deep. This has a lip at the edge. Of the two remaining basins, which communicate together, one is four feet in diameter, and fourteen inches deep. The other is one foot and a half in diameter, and nine inches deep. They were the most regularly circular basins we had yet seen. And from these, also, a lip discharged the water over the edge of the rock.

“Though in the vale below we had not perceived

it, yet here the wind was high. As the foundation of the rock is much lower on the south-west side, we wished to drop the line thence, in order to find its height. Having only a ball of thin packthread, to which was affixed a small lead bullet, we attempted to throw it over, as, owing to a projection, we could not drop it; but the wind blew the thread out of its proper direction, and we were unsuccessful in two or three attempts; at last we wound the thread round the bullet and secured it better; but could not tell, though the thread was all expended, whether it had reached the bottom. To satisfy ourselves as to this, though I stood in great need of the assistance of my companion, I resolved to get down by myself; in which, however, I succeeded better than I expected. My friend had intimated that he should be uneasy till he heard my voice at the bottom. Indeed it was no small satisfaction to myself when I was able to assure him of my safety by a loud shout, which was instantly returned by him.

“On finding that the line did not reach the bottom, and that he had no more, I requested he would throw down the stick to which it was tied; but the wind carried it away, and on striking against the moss, the lead was not heavy enough to clear it. Though vexed that our labour was partly in vain, I took a sketch of the rock with my friend on the top of it, to show we had ascended it. Whilst thus employed, he startled me by throwing down one of his boots, and afterwards the other, in order to have a firmer footing in his descent. In his way down he was so fortunate as to recover the string, and, as I had marked how far it reached, I was in hopes, after all,

to know the elevation of the rock: as, in folding it over, he had entangled it, we had the greatest difficulty in unravelling it; and though two or three times we cut this gordian knot, we were afraid our hopes would prove vain. My vexation, which I confess was great, though about a thread, conduced not to mend the matter. However, by cutting, and tieing, and making allowances for the entangled parts, we found the height of the central rock to be about 110 feet. We returned to the road on our way to Mistor, and arrived at Merrivale bridge. It here began to rain: and, as an inhabitant of the moor, who was working on the road, informed us that, if rain came on about half-past ten o'clock, which was then the hour, and did not clear up by eleven, it would prove a wet afternoon, we resolved to wait this eventful half hour, and sheltered our horses in a hovel near. But having waited till our patience was exhausted, we turned our horses towards Tavistock, whither we arrived, not in so dry a state as when we set out."

ADDITIONS BY MR. BRAY.

"In the Autumn of 1831, within a few weeks, or possibly a few days, of thirty years, since the above excursion, I took a young friend to Vixen tor. He had heard of my getting to the top of it, but that no one else, it was believed, had done so since. I said that I wondered at it; particularly as I had often mentioned that I had left a twopenny piece in one of the basins; which at least, I thought, might have induced some shepherd boy to attempt it. On his asking how I ascended, I told him that I climbed

through the fissure on the eastern side as up a chimney, by working my way with my arms, and knees and back.

“ He said he should like to try it himself, and would go to reconnoitre the spot. He instantly galloped up the hill amongst the rocks; and whilst I followed him on foot, not without some apprehension for his safety, he leapt his horse over a wall of loose stones, and, to my surprise, when I saw him again, it was on the summit of the rock. We had previously seen there a raven pacing to and fro; and I make no doubt it must equally have surprised the bird at any human being thus daring to ‘molest her ancient solitary reign.’ For, that she might see him, either from her ‘watch-tower in the skies,’ or from the top of some neighbouring tor, is probable; as, on a ledge of the rock, we saw signs of its being the settled habitation of this feathered biped.

“ He had thrown off his coat, and, being dressed in black—what with the contrastive whiteness of his sleeves, and his varied position as he sought for the basin and the coin deposited in it, formed an object as picturesque as it was singular. He said that the greatest part of the surface was covered with grass or moss upon earth or mould of some depth, and that, therefore, he could distinguish but few vestiges of the basins, and nothing of the twopenny piece. To see him descend was still more picturesque, as the attitudes were still more varied and unusual, rendered also more graphically striking by being foreshortened. To this must be added the play of the muscles, as sometimes he hung by his arm, and at other other times poised himself on his foot. Nor can I forget, on my part, the sense of his danger,

which gave it a yet greater interest; for I felt no little fear, (and fear, we know, is frequently the accompaniment of sublime emotions,) as, at length, he found some difficulty in fixing his feet, and indeed stopped about half way down to take off his boots, that he might secure a firmer footing. I may here, perhaps, be permitted to remark that we thus have some data as to the period of the formation of vegetable mould in basins, and on the tops of rocks."

So concludes Mr. Bray's observations on Vixen tor. My next letter will contain various particulars about the Moor: till then,

Allow me to remain, my dear Sir,

With every respect,

Most faithfully and truly yours,

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

LETTER XIII.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS :—Pewtor Rock—Ascent to the eminence—Spacious area there found—Druidical Seat of Judgment; more perfect than the Judgment Seat at Karnbrê in Cornwall—Basins on the summit—Remarks on the Druids as legislators—Hindoos had recourse to aggeration in elevating stones—Note on the subject giving the opinion of Mr. Southey—Rock basins more particularly described—Objections to rock basins being a work of art refuted—Proofs of their being a work of art stated—Fastness or Stronghold of the ancient Britons—Small cavern at the bottom of the hill—Huckworthy Bridge—Walkhampton—Sheepstor—Visit to the Pixies' House—Return to the village—Second attempt to reach the object of curiosity—Little boy becomes a guide—The Palace of the Pixies at last discovered—Description of it—Dripping of water heard—Story of Elford hidden in the cave—Excursion to Cockstor—Roosestor and Stapletor—Mound of stones; circular form—Account of Cockstor—Roosestor remarkable—Pendent rocks—Two more Basins discovered—A most curious example of Druidical antiquity described—Stapletor—A most interesting combination of nature and art—Ascent to Stapletor—Rock Basins—Pile of rocks, pendent above, very remarkable—The companion of the writer determines to ascend the pile—Difficulty of so doing—He accomplishes the task—Discovery of a Logan Stone on the summit—The Logan shakes under the discoverer—Danger and difficulty of descent—The inquiry pursued further on this Tor—Interesting discovery of a remarkable Tolmen—This the only instance of a Tolmen found on Dartmoor—Uses of the Tolmen with the Druid priesthood of Britain—Ordeals, &c. &c.

Vicarage, Tavistock, May 6, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

FROM Mr. Bray's Journal of September, 1802,
I extract the following account of

PEWTOR ROCK.

“ We once more resumed our excursions on the

Moor, which, to my mortification, we were prevented from doing sooner by the unfavourable state of the weather. We proceeded over Whitchurch down to Pewtor, situated about two miles and a half from Tavistock.

“The ascent to this eminence is covered with rocks: among which are two that project in a pendent manner, several feet from the top of a buttress of the same material. On the summit of the tor is a spacious area, level, and pretty free from stones, and of a form approaching to an oblong square. At each corner, which is nearly facing one of the cardinal points, is an elevation of massy rocks, with their fissures or strata in a horizontal direction, that give them the appearance of rocks piled upon one another. From the opening at north-east to the corresponding one at south-west it measures 27, and from that at north-west to its opposite, 18 paces.

“The rock at the northern angle principally attracted our attention. From the form of it I could not hesitate to suppose that it was a Druidical seat of judgment. On the top is a large canopy stone, projecting about six feet, very like the sounding-board of a pulpit. Below it is a seat, projecting two feet and a half in the form of a wedge. A smooth stone supplies the back of this juridical chair; and a stone on each side may be considered as forming its elbow supporters. At its foot is a platform of rocks, somewhat resembling steps, elevated two or three feet from the ground, which is distant from the canopy about five feet.

“This curious rock is in every respect more perfect than the judgment-seat at Karnbrê, in Cornwall, described by Borlase, p. 115. The canopy is much

larger, and the seat more easy to be distinguished. Before that at Karnbrê there is an area, whose outer edge is fenced with a row of pillars, probably so placed for the purpose of keeping the profane at an awful distance. *Here* the elevated platform answers the same end in a grander manner.

“That this rock was appropriated by the Druids to their religious uses is without doubt; as it not only possesses the singularities above described, but also several basins on its top. A gentleman, whose residence is situated almost at the foot of the hill, informed me he had often visited this romantic spot, and admired the extensive prospects it affords; but had never seen or heard of these rock-basins. On my pointing them out, he immediately assented to their being the work of art.

“But before we proceed to their examination, I shall request permission to state my opinions respecting a Druidical seat of judgment. The Druids, we know, were possessed of almost sovereign sway; indeed, in some respects, of power superior even to their kings. For the monarch seldom dared to execute any thing without consulting the Druids; whose supposed intercourse with their deities afforded them the pretence of arrogating to themselves a preternatural knowledge of futurity. Criminals, especially those guilty of sacrilege or any impiety, or where the accusation was doubtful, may be naturally supposed to have been brought before the venerable Arch-Druid. The awe which his presence must have inspired, increased by the stupendous tribunal on which he sat, doubtless frequently occasioned a conscientious confession from the guilty breast.

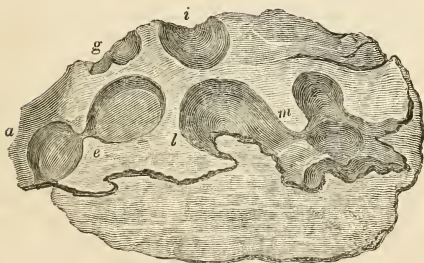
“To say that the Druids erected these amazing

piles themselves, would be to grant them the powers which they made their superstitious votaries imagine they possessed. It is probable they selected those rocks that were naturally the best adapted to their purpose, and if they used art, carefully concealed every trace of it; in order to make their followers imagine that they were piled and arranged for them by the gods themselves.

“The Druids may be supposed to have occasioned those singular forms of rock of which they were so fond, by breaking off parts of them, or detaching one mass from another, rather than by placing or piling them together in these immense heaps: though were I even to assert the latter, I might be greatly supported by the astonishing structure of Stonehenge, and also by what the Hindoos, almost equally unskilled in arts, have been known to effect in India. On the tops of some of their pagodas are amazing masses of rock. To place them in such elevated situations, they had recourse to aggeration; they took the laborious method, by accumulated earth, of forming an easy ascent, or inclined plane, to the top; by means of levers rolled them to the summit; and then removed the mound*.

* In a letter, which I was honoured with receiving from Mr. Southey, after this had been sent to Keswick, the following observations occurred; and I here venture to transcribe them, as I doubt not they will be found of interest to the reader—“If such of your Tors as the drawings represent have not been formed simply by taking away parts of them (as within living memory was done in this immediate neighbourhood, to make the Bolder stone appear wonderful), I think the stones are more likely to have been raised by mechanical means, than by the rude process of aggeration. The largest stone at Stonehenge might have been raised by a three-inch cable; and we know that the mischievous Lieutenant who threw down the rocking-stone at the Land’s End, succeeded in raising it again. The Druids themselves may not

“ On the top, then, of this rock, I had the pleasure of discovering the basins before alluded to, which confirmed the ideas I had already formed of the purposes to which this tor was applied. Of these, I counted four of a perfect, and five of an imperfect form. From north-west to south-east, the length of the rock is seventeen feet, and it is nine feet wide.



At *a* is an imperfect or shallow basin; into which communicates, at *e*, a larger one, in length three feet, width two, and depth ten inches. The bottom of this is flat and smooth. At *g* is a small imperfect one, the outward edge of which seems broken off. Near it, at *i*, is another, 2 feet in length, and eleven inches in depth. At *l m* is a basin, whose side is evidently broken off. This is three feet in length, and thirteen inches deep, and communicates with four others; two of which are perfect, and two imperfect.

have possessed either the skill or the means necessary for such operations; but the Phenicians, with whom they traded, might have helped them; and both Dartmoor and Salisbury Plain are within easy reach of a sea-port.”

“It is probable there were many more basins; as the rock on which these excavations are made, being thin, is broken, and the line of separation runs through the basins. No vestiges remain of the other part; which probably fell to the ground, and may now be covered with soil. The workmen must have taken great pains not to perforate or split the rock; as at the bottom of these basins it is but little more than an inch in thickness.

“It seems almost needless to prove these basins are the work of art; but it may be proper to obviate some objections started by persons who have never seen, or never thoroughly examined them. They say these excavations are mere hollows in the rock, formed by time and weather. Setting aside the shape of them, which is far too regular to be ascribed to these causes, I would ask why they are confined to a few particular rocks? For as almost all the rocks on Dartmoor are of the same description, namely, granite, why should some yield to the effects of time sooner than others?

“Granite, I believe, is seldom found to be carious, and is more liable to be rendered smooth than perforated, by the above causes; as by being exposed to the weather, the sandy granulations of which it is composed are worn off, and the edges as well as top of the rock are moulded into a convex or gibbous form. How is it that moss and soil, formed of decayed vegetable substances, are found in these very hollows? surely if the rock cannot resist the impetuosity of the weather, much less can the tender vegetable.

“I allow that in rivers we frequently find rocks with considerable perforations; but these are made

by the whirlpools, or eddies of the torrent. It surely would be too absurd to think these basins were the effect of the deluge; for nothing but the deluge could cover the tops of such elevated mountains. Besides, if the weather produced these wonders, they would be continually increasing, and cease to be novelties. Can it be imagined, for an instant, that nature would select only those rocks that are singular and remarkable enough in other respects, to add to their peculiarities by forming basins on the tops of them? It is strange that men will have recourse to miracles to account for what may be explained by such simple means.

“By standing at the north-west opening, you have a perspective view of the four bastions, if I may be allowed the expression, and a distant prospect of Plymouth Sound. This curious tor here wears so regular an appearance, that one might almost as easily assent to its being a work of art as of nature: possibly it partakes of both. The area may be supposed to have been cleared, as there are only five or six stones within it; which probably served as altars. The four openings also seem to have been partly owing to art. But if the whole be the work of Nature, every one must allow that she has for once deviated from her accustomed plan.

“It is not improbable that this spot was used as a fastness, or stronghold, by the ancient Britons; and, with very little addition, it might now be rendered impregnable even to the improved system of warfare of the present day. A spot of this kind, whence is so extensive a view of the sea, and whence might be descried the approach of the enemy in every direction, could not surely have been entirely neglected;

and it is well known that one and the same place was frequently converted to the purposes both of religion and war.

“ We had been informed that at the bottom of the hill there was a curious cavern, which, however, by no means answered the expectations we had formed of it. The aperture, which is about four feet long and two wide, might be easily taken for the entrance of a rabbit burrow. With some difficulty we entered this narrow passage, and found an excavation about fourteen feet in length, eight in width and five in height. It terminated in a narrow hole; and was probably the adit to a mine, or part of a stream-work; as, in the same direction, there are several pits close to it, which seem to have been opened in search of metal. I apprehend it has not unfrequently been used by smugglers, as a secret deposit for their liquors.

“ In our way to Walkhampton, after descending a most precipitous road, we passed over Huckworthy bridge, around which are a few cottages partially concealed with trees. On ascending the opposite hill, we had a very picturesque view of this rural bridge, with its arches, partly covered with ivy, bestriding a rocky river, that owes its source to Dartmoor; one of whose lofty tors closed this romantic scene. At Walkhampton, which is a small village, we gained directions to Sheepstor, where we had heard there was an excavation called the ‘Pixies’ Grot,’* and to Stanlake, near which we were informed the Dock-leet† formed a fine cascade.

* Piesies, or pixies, are supposed to be invisible beings of the fairy tribe.

† Leet is used in Devonshire to signify a stream of water.

“After passing over some downs or commons of no great extent, we entered a road, at the bend of which we had a view of Sheepstor, with its rocky summit peering over a bridge almost covered with ivy. The banks of the rivulet beneath it were fringed with willows; whilst beyond the ivied arch, appeared the tops of some lofty trees that waved their branches over the roofs of the cottages that were visible between them. On reaching the little hamlet of Sheepstor, we were informed by the matron of it, whom from her age and appearance we denominated the Septuagenarian Sibyl, that we might easily find out the ‘pixies’ house,’ where we should be careful to leave a pin, or something of equal value, as an offering to these invisible beings; otherwise they would not fail to torment us in our sleep. After thanking the good dame for her advice and information, we proceeded in search of it.

“By making a circuit, we rode to the very summit of this lofty tor, on which is a spacious area of green turf. We searched for some time amid this labyrinth of rocks for the residence of the pixies, but in vain, and lamented we had not taken a guide. We determined, however, to make a complete survey of the tor on foot, thinking that at least we should be recompensed by the sight of the distant scenery, or the nearer picturesque formation of the rocks.

“In the vale below, the little tower of the village to which this eminence gives its name forms a pleasing object. To the west is an extensive horizon; the north is bounded by other equally lofty tors, one of which is almost in the form of a regular cone or

pyramid. Below strays a little winding rivulet, content to wash the foot of the haughty mountain.*

“At the north side of the tor we discovered a narrow fissure, amid some large and lofty rocks; and imagining we had at last found the object of our search, squeezed ourselves into it with no little difficulty. The fissure was equally narrow all the way; and as it took an angular direction, we got out with as much labour on the other side. We did not, however, follow the recommendation of our aged informant, as we agreed that Oberon and his Queen Titania never could condescend to honour this spot with their presence.

“On returning for our horses, we discovered near the top of the tor two stone ridges, almost covered with turf, that intersected each other at nearly right angles, and formed a cross. In the middle was a flat horizontal stone. Measuring from this central point, the ridge to the east was twelve paces, west six, north seven, and south eleven. We afterwards discovered a larger one below, at the south side of the tor. At first we conjectured they were sepulchral monuments; and afterwards thought they might have been folds for sheep; which at the same time was endeavouring to account for the name of the mountain. But after all, these conjectures are entitled to little attention; as nothing can be accurately decided without more minute examination than we were then capable of giving.

“We returned to the village, little satisfied with our excursion; but, on inquiry, found, notwithstanding

* The leet that supplies Plymouth with its waters begins not far distant from the base of this tor.

ing all our search, that we had failed in discovering the wonderful grotto. With a little boy for our guide, we again ascended the mountain. Leaving our horses below, we followed our conductor over some rugged rocks, till he came to one in which was a narrow fissure. On his telling us this was the entrance, we laughed, and said none but the pixies and himself could enter it; but, on his assuring us it was the spot, I resolved to make the attempt. With great difficulty I succeeded, and found a hollow about six feet long, four wide, and five feet high. It was formed by two rocks resting in a slanting position against another in a perpendicular direction. The cavity was certainly singularly regular, and had somewhat the form of a little hovel. A rock served for a seat, and the posture of sitting was the only one in which I could find myself at ease. A noise occasioned by the dripping of water is distinctly heard; and as the cause of it is out of sight, it produces at first a sensation somewhat approaching to surprise, till reflection tells us the occasion of it: which might possibly have prepared the mind to imagine it the resort of invisible beings.*

“We now returned about a mile and a half, and

* The Rev. Mr. Polwhele, in his *Devon*, notices it, and in a note gives the following extract from a correspondent.

“Here, I am informed, Elford used to hide himself from the search of Cromwell’s party, to whom he was obnoxious. Hence he could command the whole country; and having some talents for painting, he amused himself with that art on the walls of his cavern, which I have been told (says Mr. Yonge of Puslinch) by an elderly gentleman who had visited this place, was very fresh in his time. The country people have many superstitious notions respecting this hole.”

None of the paintings now remain on the sides of the rock.

turning to the right, went in search of the cascade; which, as well as the cave just mentioned, is beyond measure indebted to the exaggerating tongue of Fame. This is produced by the dock-leet, flowing from the side of a hill, across a little rivulet, over a bridge or aqueduct. The effect is not in the least picturesque, and by no means recompensed us for our trouble."

The following is extracted from Mr. Bray's Journal of the same year, written a few days after the above.

EXCURSION TO COCKSTOR,* ROOSETOR AND
STAPLETOR.

"On ascending Cockstor, which is on the left of the Moreton road, we observed several ridges, some of which are of a circular form. They do not seem, however, to be of Druidical origin, as they are too irregular, and are principally formed of mounds of earth; whereas the circles of the Druids were generally constructed of stones alone. They possibly may be the remains of enclosures to defend the sheep from the wolves, which, at an early period, are said to have been very numerous on the forest.

"Towards the south of the tor is an inclosure of this description of an oblong form; at the end of which is a singular rock, with two lines or fissures on its side, in the form of a cross. Hence is a grand and extensive view of the sea, the blue hills of Cornwall, the town of Tavistock situated in a deep valley, the lofty eminence of Brentor and the distant

* Cockstor; possibly so called from the heath-cock, formerly very plentiful on Dartmoor.

horizon beyond it. The top of Cockstor spreads into a kind of plain; in the middle of which is a rocky prominence, that appears to have been a place of defence. Around it we traced the ruins of a circular wall. The foundations of a small building within it, eleven feet by eight, were plainly visible, as the walls were about four feet high. The entrance and fire-place could be clearly distinguished. By the side of it was a mound of stones, which is the loftiest point of the tor, and probably was used as a beacon or signal-post.

"The declivitous sides of this tor, to the north and east, are covered with either mole or ant-hills, as contiguous to one another as they can possibly be placed. We remarked, however, a few lines or belts without any, and on approaching these spots, found them wet and swampy. It is singular that this is the only tor we have yet seen that possesses these excrescences. They seem to indicate a depth, and consequently comparative richness of soil. Farther to the north is a mound of stones of a circular form, with a deep concavity in the middle. The circumference of this ridge measures twenty-nine paces. The stones of which it is composed are thickly covered with moss. At a little distance from it is a karn, or heap of stones, flat at the top.

"Descending this mountain, we crossed a narrow valley, and mounted the side of another tor, in a north-east direction. After passing near some pits or trenches, which we imagine are the vestiges of stream works, we met with an aged shepherd, who was collecting his flock, and informed us the hill we were ascending was

ROOSETOR.

“This name may possibly be derived from Rhôs or Rôo, signifying, in Welsh and Cornish, a heathy mountain. At present, however, there is no heath near it; and indeed scarcely any is to be seen on the whole forest, as it is constantly burnt almost as soon as it appears. By this means the heath polts, which were here numerous, are nearly extirpated, whilst the sheep are benefited by the rich pasture that succeeds. The south side of the tor has a grand and picturesque appearance. Two immense piles of rocks are of so pendent a form as to threaten every instant to fall upon the beholder. One of them is supported on its two extremities, about a couple of feet from the ground, by some low rocks, and seems as if it had been bent in the middle by its own weight. And this probably was the case, for a perpendicular fissure or hiatus, that extends from the convexity of the base into the body of the lower stratum, proves that rocks, on their formation, must have been of a soft, yielding nature.

“This first groupe of rocks showed no symptoms of art; but on another pile, which was fifteen feet high, we found two basins—one two feet by one and a half; the other one foot in diameter. The rock consisted of seven layers, or strata, and the basins were on the stone next to the top, which was small. Another pile, though much lower, we ascended with the greatest difficulty. On the top of it were a few imperfect basins. But a mass of rocks, near the latter, afforded us a very curious specimen of the works of the Druids.



“On the uppermost stone of the mass we discovered a basin, in depth a foot and a quarter, with smaller ones surrounding it, and little channels, communicating with others in a serpentine direction. On this tor we found a sheepfold between some rocks, which were serviceable in the formation of it; and were informed by another shepherd that it was still used. A tor, it seems, is generally appropriated to a particular flock. Hence we proceeded to

STAPLETOR,

probably corrupted from Steepletor, as it has two or three piles of rock of a considerable height. On asking the old shepherd whether he thought we could climb them, he laughed at the idea. However, we determined to ascend the lowest first, which we did with no great difficulty, and discovered on it a basin, a foot and a half in diameter and one foot deep. This, contrary to all we had hitherto seen, was full of dirty water, which was probably occasioned by decayed moss. Over it hung a loftier pile, which we resolved to ascend as high as we could, without much hope of reaching the top. My friend, however, got to the very summit of it, on which he informed me was a wide but shallow basin. I followed him till I reached the third stone from

the top, which I could feel with my hand, but was unable to summon resolution enough to ascend higher.

“ Whilst I was leaning with my breast against the stone, he *moved* from his position, and *I felt the rock shake under him*. On my mentioning this circumstance, he did not seem to give it credit; but I soon convinced him, by shaking it myself, till, with some degree of apprehension, he requested me to desist.



“ I begged he would continue on the top, till I had descended and taken a sketch of it, with himself on the summit; but first gave him a plumb-line to let down, and we found he was elevated thirty feet. Whilst sketching, I conversed with him, and could almost fancy I heard a voice from the clouds. He not only stood upright, but stretched out his hands and foot in the position of Mercury, and seemed rather like a statue on the top of a lofty column than a human being on the summit of a natural rock. Besides its elevation, it hangs considerably out of its perpendicular; which so blended the feelings of fear for my friend and surprise at his intrepid firmness, that I felt the most indescribable

sensations, and my fingers could scarcely hold the pencil.



“I again made an attempt to join him, but halted in my former situation ; and the more he endeavoured to encourage me, added to my own attempts to overcome it, the more the perturbation of my mind increased. Never had I experienced such a conflict in my breast ; and, unable to bear it longer, I again descended. On letting himself down, I was obliged to direct my companion where to place his feet. Had he missed his hold, it would have been instant destruction. As he was now on the same spot where I had stood, I requested he would move the rock, thinking he could do it with greater ease, as he is much stronger than myself, and the rock must have been rendered somewhat lighter by his having removed from it. But my astonishment was inconceivably great at his assuring me he could not move it in the least. This convinced us he must have acted as a poise ; which was confirmed afterwards by

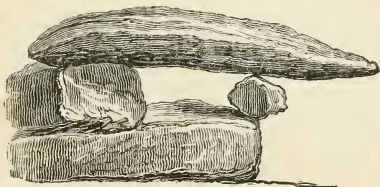
our examining the inclination of the rock, and the point on which he stood. As one part of the rock projected considerably, it required something on the opposite side to balance it, and when this was removed it destroyed the libration; so that there was less danger of its falling when he was on it than otherwise. When he was half way down, the shepherd again joined us, with the laugh of stupid wonder, and saying he had observed him on the top, asked how he could possibly get down.

“On the same groupe of rocks is a singular Druidical monument, or tolmen, for such I am convinced it is. The word is composed of Toll, a hole, and Mên, a rock, in the Cornish language. After a description of this, which is different from any mentioned by Borlase, we will consider the purposes to which works of this description were applied. On



the top of a rock, with a flat surface, a stone, nine feet long, and six wide, is supported by two other

stones. One of the supports is placed on the very edge of the rock. Neither point of bearing is an inch in thickness, so that, in all appearance, a slight effort would remove it. Through this aperture I crept, not without apprehension, and took especial care not to touch its supporter even in the slightest manner.



“The tolmen is denominated by Borlase a stone deity. By going under the rock, or through the passage formed by it, he thinks one acquired a degree of holiness; or that it was used to prepare for, and initiate into, the mysteries of Druidism, their future votaries. Some, too, he says, might be resorted to by people troubled with particular diseases, who, by going through these passages, left their complaints behind them.*

“After all, however, it is probable that *this* rock cannot come under such denomination, as tolmen in general are large orbicular rocks, supported from the ground by two small ones. And as nothing similar to it is to be found in Borlase’s account of Druidical remains in Cornwall, I may be allowed, perhaps, to indulge my own conjectures.

* “Creeping under tolmen for the cure of diseases is still practised in Ireland, and also in the East, as is shown by Mrs. Colonel Elwood in her travels.”—*Gentleman’s Magazine*, July, 1831.

“I am inclined, then, to think that *this* was designed as a kind of moral touchstone. The Druids might lead the accused to the spot, point out to him the apparently tottering rock, and by threatening to make him pass under it, when, if guilty, it would fall and crush him, extract from the delinquent the confessions of his fear. We know, though Borlase has unaccountably overlooked it, that ordeals of various kinds were used by the ancient inhabitants of this kingdom; and the rock ordeal may be supposed as effectual as any other. After examining some more rocks, where we found nothing remarkable, we returned, with the determination of soon visiting Mistor, which is the next to the north-east, and which our good shepherd informed us was the most curious on the moor, and that we should there meet with what was called *Mistor pan*: this we concluded must be a Druidical basin of a large size.

“I may here observe, that Vixon, or Vixen Tor, described in a former excursion, receives its name, as I am told, from Vixen, the female of a fox; these animals resorting there from a neighbouring wood, near the Walkham, to breed among the hollows of the rocks.”

In my next letter I propose giving you several other extracts from Mr. Bray's Journals. In the interval,

Allow me, my dear Sir,

The honour to remain,

Very faithfully and truly yours,

A. E. BRAY.

LETTER XIV.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Mistor described—Tumuli and circles near Mistor—Ashes found in the circles—Barrows—Stream-work, &c.—Brentor—Beacon station with the ancient Britons—Account of this most conspicuous and remarkable tor—Church on the very top of it—Its commanding station—Legend respecting it—Another tale respecting its foundation—Most probable tradition concerning its erection—Brentor a striking object at a distance—Camden's notice of the Gubbins, a rude race of men inhabiting a neighbouring village—Wherefore called cramp-eaters—Longevity, instance of it in Elizabeth Williams—Geology of Brentor—Mr. Polwhele quoted.

Ticarage, Tavistock, May 10th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I SEND you in this Mr. Bray's account of an excursion, made in the same year as the former, to

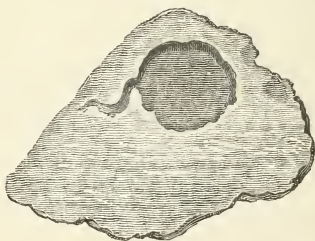
MISTOR ON DARTMOOR.

“This tor, which is situated about five miles from Tavistock, we visited to view the *pan* already mentioned.* It lies to the left of the Moreton road, near the river Walkham. A small rock, or tor, probably little Mistor, is near it: this we ascended: it had nothing but its natural, yet regular appearance, almost like that of masonry, to attract our notice.

“On continuing our ride hence, we found the

* The popular legend respecting Mistor pan is, that it was formed by the devil, and used by him as a frying-pan on particular occasions.

ground swampy, and before we reached Great Mistor, crossed a stream work of considerable extent. Here there are four or five masses of regularly piled rocks, on one of which, about the centre of the tor, is a basin, the largest we had yet seen, three feet in diameter, and six inches in depth. The bottom was flat and smooth. It had a lip, with a channel to the north-east. Near it, on the same ridge, is a singularly formed rock ; from its appearance, we concluded



it was a logan stone, but tried in vain to move it. We examined every part of the tor, but could find no other work of art : if there ever had been any, it was probably destroyed some years ago by the lawless rout of idle young men, who sallied out and purposely overthrew every rock they were able to move in this neighbourhood. Whilst we were employed in these investigations, we sheltered ourselves from a shower of rain, by entering a chasm amid the rocks, and made them echo with the voice of song."

The next extract is from the same Journal, kept by Mr. Bray during his excursions on the moor.

TUMULI AND CIRCLES NEAR MISTOR.

" Having occasion to pass over Dartmoor, without

any intention of renewing my researches on it at that time, I thought I observed, as I ascended Merrivale hill, a mound or two, at the left hand, at some distance from the road. It was rather remarkable they had not before attracted my notice, particularly as, in our last excursion, I cast my eyes over it in doubt whether I should examine it more minutely or not.

“As I was not much straitened for time, I directed my course to the spot, which is an enclosure, and found the first barrow I came to was of an oblong square, thirty-five paces round the base, with shelving sides and flat at the top. It was covered with moss, rushes and grass, and had a broad but shallow trench around it. It stretched east and west, or rather north-east and south-west. Another near it was of the same dimensions. A little beyond this was one thirty-seven paces round. They all pointed to the same quarter of the heavens. At a distance I perceived several others, and determined to return to my horse, which I had fixed to the hedge, and ride to them. I was convinced, from their shape and situation, that they were barrows or tumuli, which were in remote ages receptacles of the dead.

“Owing to enclosures I was obliged to return to the turnpike road, and, near the circles above-mentioned, found a man employed in building a hut, the foundations of which I had before remarked. He informed me that he had a grant from Mr. Lopez” (the late Sir M. Lopez) “of several acres around, and intended to reside there with his family. On my asking him what he imagined the circles were designed for, he repeated the old story, that they

were used as a market during the plague at Tavistock, the account of which he traced back to his great grandfather. He told me he would show me the spot where the market-house stood, together with the *wraxelling* ring, or place appropriated for wrestling. The circles he conceived were *booths*; and, said he, 'To prove they were, I've found many of their fire-places with ashes in them.'

"This alone was wanting to corroborate my opinion of their being used by the Druids in their sacrifices, or as dwellings by the aboriginal inhabitants of the forest. He promised me he would let me know when he had discovered any more. On accusing him of having destroyed some of the circles, he said the stones were very *handy* for him, and he did not know what use they now were of. But, on my informing him, that I should endeavour to bring them into notice, which might possibly induce the curious to visit them, and if he acted as their guide he might meet with some remuneration, he promised he would restrain his destroying hand. On finding he had resided for most part of his life near Vixen Tor, I asked whether he had ever been on the top of it, to which he replied, it was impossible; and I could hardly persuade him I had myself accomplished that feat.

"I thence directed my route in pursuit of the remaining barrows towards Mistor, and leaving my horse near the stream-work mentioned in one of my former rambles, entered the enclosure, which reaches from the river Walkham half way up the rocky side of Mistor. The first barrow I arrived at was twenty-seven paces round, the next twenty-seven, another thirty-four. Near this was one thirty-eight, and

another twenty-five. They were in general about four and a half feet high. Not far distant was the largest I had yet seen; the circumference of which was forty-eight paces, and its height six feet. Near this were two more, one twenty-eight paces, the other thirty-two in circumference. It may possibly be said that they are nothing more than old peat stacks, as, where the turf has been removed, the earth is very black, but this is the natural colour of the soil on the moor. It would be absurd to imagine such pains would be taken to place them all in the same direction, or to make them all of nearly the same size. But the strongest proof, till one of them be opened, (which at some future time I hope to do,) is that the next I came to evidently had its sides faced with stone. This was twenty-four paces round. At the east end of it is a circle, ten paces in diameter; it was different from any other I had before seen. Stones were piled upon each other to the height of two feet, which was about the width of the wall. The entrance was to the south, whence you have a fine view of the sea, Maker heights, and Vixen Tor.

“Near this was another barrow, thirty-two paces round, more distinctly faced with stone. Thus in all there are thirteen tumuli within the space of less than half a mile; and since they are surrounded on all sides by such evident Druidical remains as basins and circles, we may surely attribute them to the same origin. Indeed, this spot seems to have been the sacred cemetery of the Druids.

“I forgot to mention above, that an idea may be started, from their proximity to a stream-work, that these mounds were formed of the rubbish arising from them. This, however, could by no means be

the case, as they surely would not have carried it to such a distance from the work, nor was there any reason to form a trench around, or to make them in so artificial a shape. Near these tumuli are several lines of stones stretching in various directions, some straight, and others in a circular direction. To the north-east of them, I found very unexpectedly a great number of circles, of all sizes, from three or four paces to sixty or seventy in diameter. The largest united three or four small ones, and had lines of connexion with some at a distance. On the range of its circumferential line, a square is formed, on the inside, by three or four stones, which has an entrance from without. This I conjecture to have been the sacred hearth or altar for burnt sacrifice. And near one of the circles is a pit or cavity, which possibly might have been applied to the same purpose."

The next extract which I here send you from Mr. Bray's papers is an account of his excursion to

BRENT TOR.

"On my road, I passed Hurdwick, about a mile from the town; it was formerly the property of the Abbot of Tavistock. And the remains of a barn, of considerable extent, with bold projecting buttresses, built, probably, about the same period with the Abbey, prove it to have been a place of no mean consequence. Indeed, the Abbot was called to the House of Peers, in the time of Henry VIII. by the title of Baron Hurdwick.

"At the northern extremity of Heathfield, Brent Tor is a conspicuous object. In Gibson's edition of Camden's Britannia, we are informed that Brent Tor is a name signifying 'a high rocky place.' As

Tor alone can lay claim to the greater part, if not the whole of this definition, (for *tor*, tower, *turris*, are all of the same import, meaning something elevated; and *tor*, moreover, is generally, at least in Devonshire, confined to a rocky hill,) the *first* syllable, and thus the very name of the place itself, is totally omitted.

“ *Brent* is the participle of *breunen*, to burn. And little doubt can be entertained that Brent Tor was an ancient beacon, upon which wood, turf, or other rude articles of fuel, were *burnt* by way of signal; and we know that the church upon its summit is even at present ‘a famous sea mark.’ Four or five tumuli, about a mile distant, on Heathfield, are still called the Beacons. It was probably, in the time of the early Britons, a stronghold, or hill fort; as, on the northern side, may be traced two or three mounds, that seem to have been raised for the purpose of defence.

“ The summit of this lofty eminence is generally so damp and wet, that the very coffins are said to float in the vaults. This, no doubt, is greatly exaggerated: but most of the hills on Dartmoor are so wet and boggy, from being frequently covered with mist, that they justly might be designated as ‘cloud-capt tors.’ In addition to which, the western winds, being here the most prevalent, bring the clouds from the Atlantic ocean; and these, surcharged with vapour, from crossing such an immense expanse of water, are attracted and broken by the hills of Devonshire. This, in fact, is the principal cause of the humidity, but, at the same time, the perpetual verdure, for which this country is so remarkable.

“ The church on Brent Tor is dedicated to St. Mi-

chael. And there is a tradition among the vulgar that its foundation was originally laid at the foot of the hill; but that the enemy of all angels, the Prince of darkness, removed the stones by night from the base to the summit; probably to be nearer his own dominion, the air: but that, immediately on the church being dedicated to St. Michael, the patron of the edifice hurled upon the devil such an enormous mass of rock, that he never afterwards ventured to approach it. Others tell us that it was erected by a wealthy merchant, who vowed, in the midst of a tremendous storm at sea, (possibly addressing himself to his patron, St. Michael,) that if he escaped in safety, he would build a church on the first land he descried. If this was the case, he seems to have performed his vow with more worldly prudence than gratitude; as it is one of the smallest churches any where to be met with. Indeed, it frequently, and not inappropriately, has been compared to a cradle. The tower has but three small bells. It is a daughter church to Tavistock; and the Michaelmas fair, now held at the latter place, used formerly to be celebrated at Brent Tor, doubtless in honour of its tutelar saint. The stone still lies by the road side, on which the pole with a glove, the usual concomitant of a fair, was erected. Probably, however, it was originally the base of a cross.

“The church stands on the very summit of the rock, within a few feet of the declivity, on its most precipitous side. These words, inscribed on a tablet, are seen on the south wall—‘Upon this rock will I build my church.’ There are no monuments; but the following rude inscription is worthy notice:—
‘Heare under this stone lyeth the bodie of John

Cole, Jun. of Litton, who departed this life the 23d. of November, 1694, æta: 22. Also, Johan, his sister, who was buried the 1st of February, 1694, æta: 11.'

'If thou be serious (Friend) peruse this stone;
If thou be not soe: pray: let it alone.
Against death's poison, vertue's the best art;
When good men seem to die, they but depart.
Live well: then at the last with us thou'lt feele
Bare dying makes not death, but dying ill.'

"Brent Tor is a pleasing object at a distance; here towering abruptly, there gently rising from the extensive plain of Heathfield; but when viewed near, it is too void of foreground; though a projecting rock, at the north-west end, under which is a little shed, or stable, gives it a prominent feature, and in some degree supplies the deficiency: for as one passes along the road beneath, the form of the hill is perpetually varying; and the effect is totally changed, as the tower is seen on the one side or on the other of this impending cliff.

"In Camden, the inhabitants of a neighbouring village, called the Gubbins, are stated to be 'by mistake represented by Fuller (in his English Worthies) as a lawless Scythian sort of people.' The writer contents himself with asserting that it is a mistake, though upon what authority does not appear; as even at the present day, the term Gubbins is well known in the vicinity, though it is applied to the people, and not the place. They still have the reputation of having been a wild and almost savage race; and not only this, but another name, that of *cramp-eaters*, is still applied to them by way of reproach.

"Instead of buns, which are usually eaten at country revels, in the West of England, the inhabi-

tants of Brent Tor could produce nothing but cramps, an inferior species of cake; probably owing to the badness of their corn, from the poverty of the soil. Thus they were called cramp-eaters, as the whiskered warrior in the *Batrachomyomachia*, or battle of the frogs and mice, of Homer, was denominated *Sitophagus*, or cake-eater. And if a *bad* pun may be allowed, they might be learnedly called *cacophagi*. We know that the gipsies are descended from the Egyptians; but, notwithstanding Fuller's credit is thus fully re-established, we must not venture to suppose that the modern inhabitants of Brent Tor aspire to carry back their genealogy to the ancient Scythians; particularly as history informs us that their country was not held in high esteem, even by its natives. For a certain petulant Greek objecting to the celebrated Anacharsis that he was a Scythian, 'True,' says Anacharsis, 'my country disgraces me, but you disgrace your country.'

"If, however, longevity be a characteristic of savage nations, the inhabitants of Brent Tor will not, perhaps, be displeased at being compared to them in this particular. There is now living among them a woman called Elizabeth Williams, of the age of one hundred and six, who still retains the full possession of her faculties. She says she was married at the age of twenty-four, at Lamerton. And by the parish register of that place, it appears that this occurred in April, 1736; so that, if this account be correct, she can be no more than ninety-eight years old. Her maiden name was Blatchford.

"It may not be uninteresting here to subjoin Mr. Polwhele's notice of Brent Tor rock, extracted from his *Devon*. 'The summits of these (the Dartmoor) Tors are found to be composed, in general,

partly of granite and partly of dark brown iron-stone, which in some places appears to have been in a state of fusion. Brent Tor, and several other tors on the west side of the river, are undoubtedly volcanic. Brent Tor is very curious; it being one mass of hill, rising to a great height from a perfect plane, and entirely divested of every thing of the kind besides itself, and differing from all other tors which we visited. We found it covered, between the rocks, with a fine verdure, and every indication of a very rich soil, far different from the heath which surrounds it. We brought away some bits of the rock, which, in general, is a deep rusty blue, inclining to black, hard and heavy, with pores here and there as if worm-eaten; some of the pores contain a little of a brownish red earth, but whether of the ochre kind we could not determine. Near the top of the tor some pieces were found more porous, even resembling a cinder, or piece of burnt bread, and very light; we supposed it to be a variety of tophus. Another observation was very striking, that this tor does not contain a single particle of granite, that we could discover. In this it differs from most of the other tors we visited, though we found some on the west side of the river Lid, which contained stones of a similar porosity. From the above observations, we were led to believe that this remarkable tor was the effect or remains of some long-ago extinguished volcano; as, in its appearance, situation, soil, strata, &c., it argues strongly for it. It bears, also, a great similarity to the description in Brydone's Tour through Sicily, &c., of the hills which he calls 'the offspring of Etna.'"

Allow me to remain yours, &c.

A. E. BRAY.

LETTER XV.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Source of the Tavy on Dartmoor—North Crockern-tor—Account of some very curious circles found in this excursion—Longbetor—South Beetor—Bel-tor, or Belleter—Excursion to Tavy Head—A Farmer becomes guide—Upright stone marks the spot of the grave of a suicide—Cranmere Pool—Source of the river Tavy—The tracks of foxes seen—A hare chased by a fox—Superstition respecting the spirits condemned to the pool—The guide's credulity—His account of having been himself bewitched by an old woman—Extraordinary walking race mentioned by the Farmer—Head of the river Walkham—Crossing the fen—Peter Tor, a fortified stronghold—The romantic and melancholy story of George Stevens related.

Ficaruge, Tavistock, May 13th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I PURPOSE sending you, in this letter, an account of the source of the river Tavy, which rises on Dartmoor, and flowing through the adjacent country, gives name to Tavistock, which is situated on its banks. But wishing to be as regular as I can, I shall continue my extracts from Mr. Bray's Journal in the order in which I find it written. The following brief notice of some Druidical vestiges comes before his account of the source of the Tavy. It is dated—

“Sept. 20th, 1802. As the family had determined

on going to Bair-down this day, I was glad to be of the party, to continue my observations towards the north of Crockern-tor, which I had lately visited. After passing Merrivale bridge, we thought we saw a circle or two on the right of the road, in a valley where there are directing-posts from Tavistock to Ashburton. As I had not been exactly on that spot before, we proceeded to it; and the first circle we found was fifty-six paces in diameter; including a smaller one to the westward, another to the south-east and a third to the north-east. That to the westward had a diametrical line intersecting it. To the north and south were two or three large flat stones set on end; and in the circle were some rocks, which possibly might have served the purpose of altars.

“At a little distance from this is another circle, or rather three parts of one; for a portion is very rudely traced: it is one hundred and sixteen paces in circumference. Adjoining, but on the outside, is a smaller circle, with a diametrical line, and within it are two others, somewhat large, connected with the circumferential line. On the outside of this is a large flat rock, which serves as a back to what was once, I conjecture, an altar-hearth, as there are some stones, now partly thrown down, that form a square before it. Near this spot were three or four smaller ones, not deserving any particular notice.

“Continuing our route to the left, on the east we arrived at a small tor on the acclivity ascending to Hessory tor, on which is a basin two feet and a half long and six inches deep. My father, who had never before seen a rock basin, was convinced, though this was by no means a regular one, that it must have been a work of art. We fell into the road again at

Rundle's stone, on which, on the south side, is the letter R, in alto relievo. Hence I had often thought I perceived to the east-south-east a tower; and though every person who had heard me mention it considered it as supposititious, I, by means of a glass, now saw it very distinctly: from its direction as well as appearance, I think it must be Lord Courtenay's Belvidere.

"My father left me at Bair-down; and I resolved to visit by myself the tors, four in number, to the east of the Dart. The first tor is just above Wistman's Wood: it is called Longbetor. On one stone I found three imperfect basins; on another a shallow one; and on a third, three more, also imperfect. This tor bears evident marks of having suffered from some concussion of the earth; for the strata lie in all directions, and some piles of rocks have fallen from their perpendicular, and, though falling against others, have not separated. At *South Beetor*, on the same ridge, there is a basin two feet and a half in diameter: it is shallow. Waydown tor, though much the highest of the four, has nothing remarkable, excepting the view, which is very extensive. It is almost the only tor of such a height that is covered with grassy turf.

"Belleter (or Bell tor)* has on its summit a circular mound of stones, hollow in the middle, with two little piles at the east and west. This is evidently artificial; as there are no loose stones near, excepting those fallen from the top. A rock or two to the north had nothing worthy notice. In many

* Supposed, as stated in a former letter, to derive its name from Bel, or Belus, the sun, worshipped by the Britons.

places the ground was boggy ; I was obliged, when this was the case, to tie my horse to some rushes, not without some degree of fear that he would eat himself loose."

EXCURSION TO TAVY HEAD.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE SAME.

"Sept. 22. After taking an early breakfast, accompanied by my friend, I set out to visit Tavy-head. We went first to the village of Peter Tavy, where my father had recommended me to make inquiry of a farmer of the name of Mudge. We met two men driving sheep to Tavistock market, and, on applying to them for information, found it was the farmer and his son. On learning who we were, he insisted on accompanying us himself, and accordingly returned for a horse ; and to be more expeditious, mounted him without any saddle.

"We soon found he was well acquainted with all the western parts of the moor. Indeed he was communicative in every respect ; and informed us that he had a large family ; which, at times, from misfortunes and losses, he should not have been able to have brought up, had it not been for the many kindnesses of his landlord, who, amongst others, permitted him to pay his rent only just when it was convenient to himself. My companion asked him who his landlord was, and I was not a little surprised to find he was my father. I was greatly affected at the good farmer's expressions of affectionate gratitude to his benefactor, and his attentions to myself.

"Near Peter Tavy is an upright stone, where was buried a man who, some years ago, poisoned

himself in consequence of the infidelity of his mistress. We first rode to Limebarrow, which is an immense heap of stones, with a little cavity on the top: in the centre is a large stone. It is eighty-five paces in circumference. The tor near it, a very low one, has nothing worth notice.

“About half a mile farther, we left our horses to the care of some persons who were employed in carrying away ‘*turves*’ (peat) and proceeded on foot towards Cranmere Pool, the source of the river Tavy. If we had not taken a guide it would have been impossible to have attempted it; for even as it was, we were half way up the leg every instant in crossing a bog, or morass, of two miles in extent, and another soon after of the same dimensions. At a spot where the verdure was entirely carried away by water, and where there was nothing but soft black peat, we ascended a circular mound, seemingly artificial, whence we had an extensive view: to the south Beltor, and Way-down tor, with the tors on Bair-down, and Hessory tor; to the west Gestor, Furtor, West Hantor, Sharpy-tor, and Sour-ton-tor; to the north, Amarcombe, West Miltor and East Miltor, Rowtor, and others, with I believe Sheperton, Wild and Watern tors.

“To the north-east we perceived a flag on a hill about a mile distant, to which we went, and conjectured it was affixed there by those employed in the trigonometrical survey of the county; though one would think, from its not being worn, that it had been but lately erected. The Dart rises at a little distance from it.

“We saw frequently the track of foxes; and our guide informed us that once he had seen a fox in

chase of a hare. This is a fact rather new, I believe, in natural history. About a mile farther, in the midst of a bog of a considerable extent, we found Cranmere Pool. It is not, as represented in the map, on the top of a hill, but in a low part of the bog; however, the bog itself is on high ground. The pool was dry, and through it we observed the foot-marks of a fox. I walked into it some little distance without sinking higher than my ancle. It does not appear to be more than a hundred feet in diameter; nor can the water itself be more than six or eight feet deep when it is full. I am inclined to think that its size must have been exaggerated by the fears of those who viewed it only at a distance; for in wet weather it cannot well be approached. Indeed, at present, we found many deep holes around it full of water, and partly covered with long grass, so thick that it required the utmost circumspection to wade along in safety.

“Our guide informed us that it is believed spirits are here condemned to suffer. Our guide, indeed, was not very sceptical; for he said that an ill-minded old woman, who is still alive and lives near him, had *bewitched himself*, so that for seventeen weeks he never slept an hour, nor ate more than a biscuit or two; that he never felt hungry nor sleepy; that always at twelve o'clock at night, precisely, such pains as of pricking of pins, would so torment him in his side, that he was obliged to be taken out of bed, and that then he would sit up till six o'clock in the morning, when these tortures regularly left him!

“The pool is about eight miles from Peter Tavy, and within three of Zeal, near Oakhampton. On

our remarking to our guide how lustily he walked, he informed us his age was sixty-five, but that he could never walk so well as his son, who, for the wager of a guinea, had run eleven miles in forty-five minutes, from Tavistock bridge to Nackersknoll.

“Returning from Cranmere Pool, we again crossed the Tavy, which is here a little rivulet. We also saw the head of the river Walkham. We mounted Furtor, on which is a basin two feet and a half in diameter, and eight inches deep. There, also, are two small contiguous basins, one of which has a perforation communicating with the side of the rock.

“Hence we again waded to our horses, after walking about ten miles across the fen. We were not a little heated and fatigued; but, had it not been for a pretty brisk wind, we should have been much more so. We rode about half a mile, and, coming to a clear stream, went to dinner on a venison pasty, which I had carried in my valise, and quenched our thirst with grog. Soon after we took leave of our good old guide, and went to Peterstone rock, the highest stone of which, about forty years ago, he said had been split in pieces by lightning.

“Peter Tor was evidently a fortified stronghold, as it is surrounded by a mound of stones, and, in the midst, three or four rocks are encompassed with the same. Hence is a distant view of the Sound, &c. The tor is composed of black granite, covered with moss. The strata are not, as usual, horizontal, but jagged, and generally perpendicular. Below it is a large oval ridge of stones, one hundred and thirty-three paces long, with seven small internal circles. From a tor near Peter Tavy is a very fine and ex-

tensive view—the winding river, Tavistock, Mount Edgcumbe, Kit Hill, Brentor, &c.”

In the first part of the above account, which I have extracted from his old Journal, Mr. Bray mentions the upright stone that marks the spot where a young man was buried who had poisoned himself, in consequence of the infidelity of his mistress. That spot is at the meeting of four cross-roads, now grass-grown; it is known by the name of Stevens's grave. The death of this unhappy suicide occurred many years ago; but I have endeavoured to learn such particulars of the melancholy story, as could be gleaned from the accounts given by a few old persons who had heard all about it in their youth.* The tale is not devoid of interest. It is indeed one of those tragedies in real life that are sometimes chosen as the foundation on which to build a work of fiction. As far as melancholy incident may be concerned, the following circumstances, I think you will say, need no addition.

The name by which the little lonely mound of earth, marked by its upright stone, is still known in this country, declares that of its unfortunate tenant; and ages will in all probability pass away before Stevens's grave will be forgotten, or before the superstitious dread is no more, which now makes the neighbouring peasantry shun the spot, after sundown, where the condemned spirit of the suicide is still believed to walk from midnight to cock-crowing;

* Had I commenced these letters before the death of the late Miss Mary Adams of Tavistock (who died at a great age), I could have obtained far more information on this, and all other traditional subjects, than I now possess. Miss Adams was the depository of every legend or story connected with this neighbourhood, that had been handed down for centuries, from generation to generation.

since, with us, in so just horror is the crime of self-murder held, that the poet's assertion, respecting all who leave the world by their own hand, would be here received without a doubt—

“The common damned shun their society.”

The Christian name of Stevens was, I believe, George, but this point I have not ascertained for a certainty. Yet we will, if you please, call him such here; for, though it may be erroneous, it is of no great consequence. George Stevens, then, was a country youth, who followed the occupation of his father, that of husbandry; though, from his having been to school and possessing a quick capacity, he was more educated and less rude in his manners than were country lads in general, either in his day, or in our own. He was, it should seem, of a susceptible, thoughtful, and grave nature. In fact, he was exactly that sort of character where the deepest and the strongest feelings are ever found to exist, though wholly unsuspected by their common acquaintances, who look only on the surface of things, just as an idle observer looks on a still and quiet pool, and, because it neither rushes tumultuously forward, nor swells itself into billows and breakers, thinks not it can be of any real depth or force, but estimates its power only by its appearance. George, likewise, loved a book, whenever he could get one; and though at this distance of time I cannot possibly say what might have been the nature of his studies, I should conclude, as there were then no circulating libraries in the neighbouring town of Tavistock, that his books must have been such as he could borrow from the village schoolmaster, or

find, by chance, in any farm-house, where he had an acquaintance.

Whatever they were, no doubt they assisted to give a certain degree of refinement to his feelings: and George's love of reading, in a mind so serious, produced perhaps a habit of thoughtfulness and reflection, that was strengthened by his solitary and quiet occupations, amidst the wild scenes in which he led his master's sheep to graze amongst the hills and valleys in the romantic neighbourhood of Cudlip town and Dartmoor. I do not know whether George ever read poetry, but as he became the victim of a powerful and ill-requited passion, I should be tempted to fancy he had done so. For if it be true that the reading of Robinson Crusoe has made many boys run away, and become sailors, how can we doubt that the reading of poetry, (more especially love-poetry,) by filling the mind with images of beauty, tenderness, and perfection, has made many become lovers; their mistresses often being invested with the charms there ascribed to the heroines of such productions by the excited imagination of their admirers? Be this as it may, whatever books George read, or whether or not he indulged in romantic dreams, amidst romantic scenery, in his pastoral employment, certain it is he became deeply enamoured with a young girl, the fame of whose beauty is not even now totally extinct.

Her name was Mary. And though her station in society was much the same as his own, the child of a husbandman, yet her friends were poorer than his. Her father lived in a little cottage that stood near the path which George so frequently passed in driving his sheep to pasture. She was young and

beautiful, and left much to herself. And often, as he went along, would he pause to gaze on Mary, as she sat "spinning or knitting in the sun" at her cottage-door, and singing some rustic melody with a cheerfulness that spoke a careless heart, and a spirit as light as that which animated the feathered tribes around her, as they seemed with their little warbling notes to answer to her song.

Thus was it, almost in their childish days, that the acquaintance between these young persons began; and to them may be applied the lines of Wordsworth—

With but a step between their several homes,
Twins had they been in pleasure;

* * * * *

And strangers to content if long apart.

How soon this intimacy ripened into love, or how long it was before George received her troth, as he plighted to her his own, I cannot tell. But as, in the simplicity of rustic life, there are no forms of etiquette to be observed, and nothing that is factitious, I conclude there were no greater difficulties to be overcome, than a little shyness on the part of George (for true love is always modest) in telling Mary she had all his heart; and a downcast look, a blush, and a corresponding feeling of modesty, possibly revealed to him, even before her lips confirmed the truth, that she was nothing loth to find herself the chosen of his affections. There was, however, one obstacle to the happiness of the youthful pair, which even higher born and more polished lovers sometimes experience,—they had no money to begin the world with, and their friends thought them too young to marry without it. The usual counsels of time, patience,

and hope deferred no doubt were urged to make them pause before the knot was tied that never could be broken.

The lovers, perhaps, thought their case a hard one ; and it was now observed that Mary did not, as she used to do, sit for hours together spinning or working at her cottage-door, and only relieving her toil by her song, or by welcoming a casual acquaintance, who stopped to be "telling with her," as the common phrase of the county expresses a gossip between two friends. Mary now found some occasion or other to stray from home ; and she would be out on the down, as well as George, to look after the sheep, (for her father, by dint of frugality, had managed to add one or two to his little stock, in the attempt to do something in the farming way for himself,) or water was to be fetched from the rivulet, or there was an errand or a message, that none but Mary was so ready to carry out of doors. And on all these occasions, it chanced, such was the fortune of the affair, that George Stevens was always near at hand to help her. He would be seen on the hills, looking after Mary's scanty flock more carefully than his own ; or with delight plucking for her the wild honey-suckle, or any pretty flower that love taught him to select as an offering to beauty. And on a holiday, George and Mary were never parted : in the merry-making of the village he was her partner ; so likewise in the summer evening walk ; and never was he happy excepting by her side.

But alas !

"The course of true love never did run smooth."

nor does the story of George's ill-fated attachment in the least contradict the assertion of the poet.

About this time there came into the neighbourhood a young man, who took a large farm that was to be let. It had a good house and plenty of land, and he had kine and all things fitting; and was, indeed, for one in his station, a very great man. In addition to the advantages of fortune, he was of a comely person, and wore a smart coat on a Sunday; and all the country girls admired him; and his father being dead, he had no one to control his actions, so that it was thought it would be the making of any young woman on whom he fixed his eyes for a wife. But those eyes, for some time, looked with indifference on all, till they beheld Mary, and then they looked no farther for a choice. Conscious of his own qualities, both personal and otherwise, the young farmer thought so little about being refused for the sake of a pennyless clown, that I fear the sweet-hearting of Mary with George, a circumstance known well enough in the neighbourhood, never once entered his head as likely to be any serious obstacle to his wishes. Perhaps, too, he had not the most exalted notions of female constancy when exposed to temptation. His courtship was strongly advocated by Mary's friends. And as he possessed that power which worldly wealth confers, of being able to advance an inferior by his notice, or to depress him by withholding the employment he could afford to give him on his farm, it is not improbable the father of Mary found his own interest, and that of his other children, deeply concerned in the success of this new suitor for his daughter's hand.

The situation of George was now pitiable: he was discountenanced; and Mary kept as much as pos-

sible within doors, in order to put a stop to those country walks and pretty pastimes which had hitherto brought her and her old sweetheart so much together. Let me not be unjust, however, to her memory; since though common report averred that George died in consequence of her infidelity, there is no proof, that I could ever find, that she really was unfaithful. This part of the tale is involved in much obscurity. To hazard, therefore, even some conjectures, in attempting to unravel the cause that led to the catastrophe, may be admissible. It is not improbable that the vanity of Mary was flattered that a poor girl, like herself, could win the affections of a man who would have been considered a great match for any wealthy farmer's daughter all the country round. She was envied her supposed good fortune. And how apt is this very circumstance to pamper self-love, to raise airs of importance and of triumph, that injure, if they do not destroy, the most amiable feelings of the female heart! So that if she did not actually accept the farmer as a suitor, I should apprehend, by what followed, that she must have received him with complacency; and this, with a lover, was not the way to extinguish his hopes. For my own part, I am willing to consider her conduct in the most charitable view, and to think that *fear* might have had as large a share in her apparent infidelity as vanity itself. She fancied, perhaps, that she ought not altogether to risk the benefit her father received from her lover's notice and assistance, by a too rude or abrupt rejection of his suit. Poverty, indeed, has many ways of temptation to evil. Even her father himself *might* (I do not say he did) have appealed to her feelings of duty and

affection, and might have begged her not to deprive him of a friend so important to his welfare, who had become such solely on her account.

But be this as it may, certain it is poor George now felt all the misery of neglect and ill-requited affection. His deep and powerful feelings, which, to the common eye, had been concealed under a calm demeanour in happier days, now, like hidden fires, burst forth with fearful violence, and one rash act was but the prelude to another. Previous, however, to this storm of passion (which I am about to relate) he had struggled to forget one who, he feared, no longer deserved his affection. But the very effort to do so kept alive that fatal remembrance. He neglected his business; he grew melancholy, careless of himself, and took no interest in anything around him; often wandering out on the moor, and particularly haunting one spot where he had been accustomed to sit on a mound of earth, under a tree, to watch the coming of Mary, as she would steal away from home, and, with the foot of a fairy, would trip up the hill to meet him.

It was on *that* spot he had delighted to pay her his little services of love, to give her flowers, (they were all he had to give,) and to receive from her the often renewed assurance that she loved him more than all the world. There would George sit, hour after hour, and still, at intervals, bring flowers, as if he would cheat reality with some fond fancy of his own creation. But, alas! there was no Mary to receive the gift, no kind hand, no laughing and eager eye to meet his, and bid him welcome. Lonely and deserted, he would cast down his flowers, even as Mary had cast down all the hopes she had once

raised in his heart to make him happy. And now, may be, he thought, as he sat, of the story he had many times read, when a boy, of the bean which had been sown by Hope till it grew into a fair plant, towering to the skies; and then came the giant Disappointment, with a curtal axe, and in one moment the growth of months and seasons was no more.

At length his feelings changed their character, but not their force, a sense of injury surmounted every fear. A sense, also, too deeply cherished, that Mary, by whom he was once so fondly loved, would still hold him dear, did she but know the strength of his affection, made him resolve, reckless of all else, to secure her even by the sight of his very despair, if no other means might be left to awaken her feelings. In this tempest of passion, he set out for the cottage; but chancing to meet in his way the rival who had destroyed his peace, George attacked him with such frenzy, that he had just cause to fear he had laid himself open to the power of the law, which his antagonist threatened to use against him.

After this quarrel, it appears that George once more saw Mary. What passed at that interview I know not; but it is probable she entered into some explanation with him relative to her late conduct. She might also have promised to dismiss his rival for ever from her sight. It is likely something of this kind passed, as George, that night, returned to his home, in a more calm and tranquil state of mind than he had done for many weeks before. I am willing to hope that Mary did not intend to deceive him; for George, it was said, had betrayed to her his dreadful and wicked design on his own life, if he ever again saw his rival in her company. It is

not impossible that the desire she entertained to serve her father, the hope to soften her refusal, so as still to preserve her rich suitor as that father's friend, might have suggested to her the imprudent step she now took, a step so likely to be misapprehended by a jealous and impassioned mind. She sought, or consented to hold, an interview with the farmer, not under her father's roof, but in the open fields; and, as if fate had prepared the most bitter trial for the unfortunate George, whilst walking and earnestly conversing with the suitor, whom she had promised to dismiss for his sake, he saw her seat herself with him under the very tree where he had so often met her, when she was his own Mary, without a doubt of her fidelity.

Whether or not George met her after this, if he sought any explanation of her purpose in granting the meeting to his rival or no, I cannot tell; all that I can relate is, that, already labouring under the effects of a feverish and irritating state of mind, hurried away by passion and grief, and "*not having the fear of God before his eyes*," George Stevens rushed home on the evening of the same day, and took the poison, which in a few hours proved fatal. The inquest brought in a verdict of self-murder. No funeral rite was performed; and his remains were buried, according to the law, then in full force, with a stake driven through the body, where four cross-roads meet. The spot, to this day, is called Stevens's Grave. Of the fate of the unhappy Mary, whose imprudence or infidelity produced these dreadful events, I know nothing, and all inquiry has hitherto proved vain. In the above tale (as stories seldom lose any part of their terrors

by transmission from one generation to another) there may be, and I dare say there is, some exaggeration: but certain it is the wretched man died in consequence of his ill-requited love.

Near Stevens's grave are two places that bear remarkable names, the one being called *Black Shields*, and the other, *Smitten-Hart Lane*. I heard these names with a glow of delight, because I felt certain that some old story or legend must be connected with places thus designated. But all inquiry was useless. One silver-headed elder, more than eighty years old, whom I questioned very closely at Cudlip town, said that he "did think he had heard his grandmother, when he was a boy, tell some story about *Smitten-Hart Lane*." But he shook his white locks, and added, he now knew nothing about "they old fancies."

Yet the very *names* of those places afford a hint for a tale of poetry or romance, to one who loves to indulge in the airy-castle building of the imagination, a very harmless occupation, and a very delightful one: and you will smile, perhaps, when I tell you that, not being able to find a tradition for either of those prettily named spots, I amused myself, as I rode home, in making one for both; such, however, being wholly fictitious, have, of course, no admission in these letters. Hoping that the little melancholy episode (for such, perhaps, it may be called) of George Stevens may have afforded you some interest in the relation,

Allow me to remain, my dear Sir,

Very respectfully and faithfully yours,

ANNA E. BRAY.

LETTER XVI.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS.—Excursion to Tavy Cleave—Beautiful effects of light and shade on the lofty tors—Rocks above Tavy Cleave—Their singular character—Arthur's Seat—Tavy Cleave described—Approach to the river—Dry incrustation of foam—Bed of the river, &c.—Gertor—Sharpy Tor—Air Tor—Life of a Lamb saved—Fall from a horse—Return—Interesting excursion upon the rail-road—Names of the tors variously pronounced—spoliation among the tors—Curious process in working the granite described—The picturesque scenes around the rail-road—Architecture in which granite is used with most effect—Better for pillars than pilasters, &c.—The subject continued—Remarks on various styles of architecture—On that employed on the gateway of Dartmoor Prison—Picturesque appearance of a figure at work—Immense machinery—Blocks of granite, &c.—King Tor—Huts for labourers—Singular appearance of the men at work, clustered around, and almost hanging like bees, among the detached rocks—Destruction of these magnificent works of nature, the Tors, deplored—Granite enough to be found without destroying the Tors—Caves, or catacombs would be formed by under-ground excavations—Mines might also be discovered—Allusion to Columbus—Bark seen dropped in the road—Wistman's Wood probably in danger—Excursion resumed—Effects of a storm on the roads—Swell Tor—Difficulty of distinguishing the Tors—A vehicle observed near Merrivale bridge—Dartmoor prison near the rail-road—Dense fog—First spoliation of the Moor seventy years ago—The present, there going on, far greater and irreparable.

Vicarage, Tavistock, May 23d, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I SEND you, in this, some account, written by Mr. Bray, of our excursion to

TAVY CLEAVE, ON DARTMOOR.

“Sept. 8th, 1830. In our progress towards Tavy Cleave, whilst stood before us two of the summits

of those lofty tors that surround it, we saw between them, stretching to the remotest horizon, a number of intersecting hills, on which the light from the different distances was continually shifting, the tors themselves being in the deepest shadow. It instantly reminded me of the effects produced by the gently alternating light and shadow of the Diorama. It is seldom that such a scene is found in nature, where the fore-ground remains fixed in gloom, and light and shade seemed to chase each other over the varied landscape; because, in general, we see a continuation of extent, and the gradual, and therefore almost imperceptible changes that take place; whilst here the different points of distance were so happily combined, that the eye, as it glanced from one to the other, beheld one illuminated and the other obscured, now in succession and now in opposition, as the flitting clouds passed over them.

“The rocks above Tavy Cleave are not so much composed of the usual strata of granite as they are a conglomeration of small disjointed parts. Immediately below one of the walls (for such, therefore, we may call them) of the summit, the stones appear to have been thrown, by the hand of nature, into a circular direction. Indeed, one might almost fancy them to have been ejected from the crater of a volcano as in a whirlwind, and not to have lost their rotatory motion on their descent. Most of them being on their edge, they look like petrified waves, and may be compared, perhaps, to the Mer de Glace, not however in ice, but granite.

“Two of these broad masses of rocks are divided by an aperture, through which, with most advantage, may be viewed the scene below. Between a bold

declivity on the left, divided into two or three pointed eminences, and another less precipitate on the right, winds in a deep ravine or cleft (which probably gives name to the spot) the Tavy, at first over some shelving rocks, that give rise to long filaments of foam, and then to a broad white belt, in a transverse direction; till, meeting with a ridge, or perhaps a fissure (for the cause is invisible) it assumes, even amid its own dark waters, the appearance of a cascade, equally white with foam; and at last transforms itself, as it were, into a deep black pool.

“On descending the summit towards the south, we came to a spot which, as it reminded me of the sensations I experienced in reading the account that Sir Walter Scott, in one of his novels, gives us of the hills that overhang ‘auld Reekie,’ I ventured to call Arthur’s Seat; and near it, as if to keep up the illusion, there is a kind of cromlech, in the midst of a natural cairn. And, perhaps, from our nearer vicinity to Tintagel Castle in Cornwall, the traditional residence of this hero of the ‘olden time,’ we have as great a right as the Scotch to honour our crags with his name.

“When we approached the river, we were almost covered with what seemed showers of thistle-down. But on coming closer we saw no spot on which thistles by any possibility could grow. We soon discovered, however, that it was the efflorescence or dry incrustation of foam, which had collected between and upon the rocks beneath what I have described as the cascade. It is somewhat similar, perhaps, to the *écume de mer*, or petrified sea-foam, of which tobacco-pipes are sometimes made.

“The bed of the river here being, principally, a

horizontal stratum, seems part of the floor or original crust of the earth: and, if it have undergone any alteration, it is probably by a partial subsidence; whilst the tors around appear to have been elevated by a projectile force, and down their sides may still be seen what may be called, perhaps, cataracts of stones."

The next extract I shall here send will be an omitted passage from Mr. Bray's former Journal of the year 1814, beginning with a notice of

GERTOR.

"A conical hill of coarse granite. The sides of some of the strata appear as if pressed against one another and afterwards separated, being quite smooth as to the surface, and jagged as to the edges. Gertor affords a bold view of the winding ravine through which flows the Tavy. I next proceeded to

SHARPYTOR.

"It well deserves the name, for some of the points, almost in a perpendicular direction, appear as sharp as the head of a spear. There are four eminences at a short distance from one another overhanging the Tavy. Air Tor, or Hare Tor, to the north of the former, commands a very extensive view, looking down upon Lidford Castle. On the very summit is seen a kind of natural mound of earth, where appears also something like a circle. It is, however, hollow in the centre, and there was in it the burrow of a rabbit or other small animal. On the south-west side the granite is coarse, mingled with a square-shaped white spar. Here is a small oval basin. In going to this tor, I was obliged to leave

my horse at a distance, owing to the boggy nature of the soil. On returning, I heard the bleating of a sheep very near, but looking around, discovered no signs of one. I found, however, that it proceeded from nearly beneath me, and at length ascertained that it was a lamb which had got under the rocks. I at first, through the interstices of the rock, saw its nose only; but at last succeeded in dragging it out by its legs. Thus, my journey, long and fatiguing as it was, would have been amply recompensed had it only afforded me the opportunity of saving the life of this harmless animal. I next visited the lower part of Air Tor to the north; and observed some few projecting nodules of shining mundic in the granite. Between this and the next tor there is a small artificial karn with a concavity, and two sharp pointed heaps on its edge. On riding down the hill, my horse entangled his foot between the rocks, and by the violent effort he made in extricating himself, which was so great as to tear off his shoe, I was thrown over his head; but most providentially with no other hurt than slightly bruising my leg, and spraining my hand. This, of course, put an end to any further progress that day."

The next extract is from Mr. Bray's Journal of last year.

EXCURSION ON DARTMOOR RAIL-ROAD.

"May 17th, 1831.—Having, in the course of last year, entered upon the rail-road at Roborough Down, and pursued it till I came opposite Walkhampton, when I was obliged to return to Tavistock, this morning, soon after eleven o'clock, I mounted my horse to resume my exploration. Crossing Whitechurch

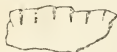
Down, and Tolch Moor, and passing that truly picturesque spot, Huckworthy Bridge, I rode through part of Walkhampton, and entered the lane, nearly in a line with the church, that brought me to the rail-road. The rail-road itself is naturally of a very monotonous character. It reminded me of a garden walk with an edging of iron instead of box. In some few places granite, or what is generally called moorstone, had been substituted; but it does not seem to answer the purpose, as it is of a brittle nature, and therefore apt to chip. The tors on the right of the rail-road, as it winds towards the moor, are called by different names in Greenwood's map from those which I collected, as well as I could, from one of the workmen.

"The first which is marked on the map has no name attached to it *. The next is Leedon, or Leeden Tor; (then Fur Tor;) then Crip Tor; then another unnamed (Swill Tor); and then King Tor †. But, according to my informant, the first is called (no doubt a corruption of Inga Tor) Innator, (or, as he pronounced it, Innator Tar: indeed, I have frequently heard this reduplication of the final syllable, with the difference of only a broader accent: as Coxtor-tar, Pewtor-tar,) the second Yeast Tor, the third Swill Tor, the fourth and fifth King Tor and Little King Tor. From the second and third having so marked a reference to that recent nuisance, a beer-shop, I should have thought he meant to quiz me, had I not recollected that yeast is only known in

* From a plan attached to Sir T. Tyrwhitt's pamphlet on the Rail-road, I find it is called Inga Tor.

† According to Sir T. Tyrwhitt. Perhaps, however, after all, his plan may not have been exactly followed.

Devonshire under the name of barm. Till, therefore, I gain better information as to their names, I shall mention them numerically. On ascending towards the first tor, I could not but lament the spoliations which had been made in it by the hand of man. Indeed, it was principally with a view to see what havoc had been, and was still likely to be, made in these majestic masses of rock, that I now sought them; for I had observed, at a distance, patches, and sometimes long lines of a whitish hue, in the midst of these sombre eminences, which reminded me of streams of lava flowing down the sides of volcanic mountains; and I could almost fancy that some of these granitic turrets had lost their battlements, and perhaps even had fallen themselves as into a crater. On a nearer view, the opening occasioned by the deportation of some of these enormous blocks of granite seemed to me like a breach in some Cyclopean fortress; the outer part of the wall that still remained being blackened and worn with weather and with age, whilst the fragments thrown or fallen from it were white and sharp edged. Of the masses scattered below, some were squared, as if for tombs and sepulchres; others reminded me of the teeth of the mammoth, on one of which I think Buffon somewhere mentions that three Frenchmen could sit. These were such as had been split, and had a serrated appearance, by the holes made in them for the insertion of wedges, thus



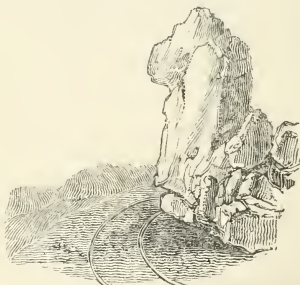
“This tor appears to have been for some time

abandoned by the stone-cutters. But I heard from another, not far distant, the 'dreadful notes of preparation,' occasioned by those who were employed in drilling such holes as I have just mentioned. The mode I had hitherto seen practised for splitting granite was by picking out short longitudinal incisions with a pickaxe, thus — — — — The method now adopted is to make perforations only, thus And this they do, not by an auger or borer, somewhat like a crow-bar, with which (by dropping it with a rotatory motion) they make holes for blasting, that require a larger calibre to contain the charge of powder, but with a lighter and more elegant instrument, being a light rod of iron between four and five feet in length, having a swell or grasp in the centre, thus . Indeed, it is not much unlike an ornament occasionally introduced in printing. It makes an acuter sound than that of the common borer; and when two or three are at work with it upon the same block, the sound may be said to be not altogether unmusical. It is astonishing with what precision, after they have lifted it up, that they again dart it into the hole they are deepening. I climbed to the top of the tor, which consisted of the usual blocks piled one upon another; and some of them being removed, I had a view of their internal structure. The horizontal strata, if so these blocks might be called, were intersected perpendicularly, and thus formed a kind of wall facing pretty nearly south. The resemblance was the greater, as there was a kind of incrustation which here and there had fallen off, and looked not a little like stucco.

“The second tor was in full work, nay, might

almost be compared to an ant-hill ; to which, indeed, when they have removed all its picturesque asperities, it will bear a yet closer resemblance. To make mountains of mole-hills is a common proverb. This is to make mole-hills of mountains. On approaching this tor, the rail-road for once assumes a picturesque appearance, where it takes a sudden turn at the base of a lofty rock ; which seemed, notwithstanding, almost a ‘baseless fabric,’ as the light was visible through an aperture between the smaller stones on which it was up-piled. The hills in the distance formed for it a good background.

“ I made a slight sketch of it in a blank leaf of my pocket-book, which I have here affixed.



“ Some huts, one a blacksmith’s shop, now presented themselves. And before it stood a vehicle, not much unlike a rude kind of vis-à-vis, with an awning. This I had observed passing on with some degree of rapidity before us. I conclude that in these carriages with iron wheels, though as cumbrous and perhaps uneasy as the scythed cars of the Britons, many pleasure-parties make excursions from

Plymouth: for a man accosted me, and said that if I wished to see the works, Mr. Johnson, or Thompson, or a person of some such name, would show them to me. I was not so desirous of seeing what had been done as what had been left undone; and, finding that the man was deaf, had little conversation with him, or indeed with any other: possibly so much the better, as I was in a humour to give them more blame than praise for their industry. At some future period, I hope to visit the spot again, and to procure information, not only about the works, but on subjects of a more general nature, which men of any intelligence, from having been long upon the spot, cannot fail to have collected. In one respect their labour seems to me to be misapplied; namely, their cutting and squaring stones not much larger than bricks, which (as if to prove that they can be applied to that purpose) they have piled up in the form of low walls. But granite, at least that of Dartmoor, which is of a coarse and rather friable texture, cannot be worked with much sharpness; and, indeed, the beauty, or at least the natural character of granite structures, is their massiveness. In architecture, it cannot be disputed, that to different materials a different form and structure is most applicable and appropriate. *Rustic* may be classed as concave or hollowed architecture; *granitic*, as convex or rounded architecture; and *porphyritic*, as sharp, square, and angular architecture. A flight of granite steps, which may be had of almost any dimensions,—for I saw to-day slabs in their natural state, thirty or forty feet long, and a block that was wrought, more than twenty,—should have a kind of moulding at the edge like stairs in carpentry, thus



and not thus



For the same reason, granite is better for pillars than pilasters, and for round columns rather than square. The remaining arches of the gateways and windows of Tavistock Abbey, which consist of coarse Dartmoor granite, present little that can be called a sharp edge; for though they have many mouldings and ornaments, yet they are invariably rough and large. And the pinnacles, instead of having what are usually called crockets (quasi little crooks?) have, for want of a better name, what I will venture to call bosses. The granite employed in the diminutive but cathedral-like church of Buckland Monachorum, being of a closer grain, is enriched with sharper ornaments, and comes, as I have heard, from Roborough Down. The natural form of the tors themselves, which consists of stones piled one upon another, seems to suggest a style of architecture that would best suit it. If a single column were to be erected, it should not be in the Corinthian, or even in the Doric, or the Tuscan order; but somewhat like a candelabrum, or a minaret, or perhaps a vase thus



Indeed, the latter is not much unlike that natural mass of granite in Cornwall called the Cheese wring. The name, no doubt, was suggested by the stones bearing some resemblance to cheeses in a press. But the blocks of granite, at least on Dartmoor, are, I

think, more like loaves piled up in a baker's shop, thus



Inscriptions might be cut out, on the most prominent parts, in the incuse manner, and even some rough ornaments in basso relievo. A fine opportunity was lost, or rather, what is worse, abused, in regard to the gateway of Dartmoor prison. As well as I recollect, it is formed thus



which, if it resemble any architecture, is most like that of the Chinese. And what makes it more hideous is, that you see the cramps by which this mass of ugliness is joined together. The form that follows might possibly have been less objectionable, and at least more in character.



But, perhaps, after all, a trilithon like one of those at Stonehenge, would have been the best portal: thus



It was rather a curious, and, indeed, not unpicturesque sight, to observe how differently the workmen were employed. One man particularly struck me, who, with a pickaxe as ponderous as a sledge hammer, was standing on a very large square stone, and pick-

ing it into shape. He seemed like a statue upon its base, put in action ; as that of Vulcan, for instance ; and I know not whether a *spectacle* of this description is not as much worth seeing, as the scenic groups formed by our would-be classic neighbours the French. The drapery, however, is not quite so well disposed ; but the muscular development far better. Passing under some machinery suspended over my head, which satisfied me that every recourse had been had to artificial as well as natural powers in this work of destruction, I ascended an inclined plane of great breadth, on which were massy chains running upon rollers, and extending to a considerable distance up the tor. This brought me to another huge mass of machinery equally elevated. This I did not venture to pass, as it was connected with two immense cranes, by which the workmen were then employed in poising and depositing on their unwieldy carriages the blocks of granite taken from what might here be called a regular quarry, for they seemed to have laid open the very centre of the tor, whose summit towered perhaps sixty or seventy feet perpendicularly above them. When, by taking a circuit, I got to the top of it and looked down, it was like looking into the bowels of the mountain.

“On proceeding to the third tor, I found that they had made a considerable opening in the side, but had not got so deep as in the other. Here, instead of an inclined plane, they removed the masses by the mere strength of horses.

“The fourth (or what I believe is King Tor) is at some distance ; and, in going to it, I passed several huts that seemed to be constructed for the use of the labourers ; some were little better than mere

cavities to shelter them from the heat of the weather. The workmen were principally clustered around, and almost hanging (like bees) from what, comparatively speaking, might be called detached rocks, thrown about in a wild and picturesque confusion, but which they will soon reduce to a mere heap of rubbish. The summit of this tor is rather of a bolder cast than the others, with a few recesses which might almost be denominated caves. Some of these masses are so perpendicular as to resemble walls; and indeed I could almost fancy myself looking out from embrasures and loop-holes. Perhaps I may be laughed at, if not censured, for lamenting what I consider the destruction of such magnificent structures erected by the hand of Nature; particularly as it is for the erection of habitations for the use of man, or for bridges, piers, wharfs, store-houses and other public edifices that are the consequence of, and continue to increase, his civilization and improvement. But there is granite enough to be found, where its removal would in every way be an improvement, without touching these hallowed vestiges of a former world. What would a mineralogist say if the bold and sharp crystallizations of his finest specimens were blunted and broken, and almost pounded into dust? How unsightly is a mine (especially after it has ceased working, and its machinery is removed) with its heaps of rubbish! These workers in stone would make Mist Tor (which, whether it be so called from *mist*—for it undoubtedly might have served for the habitation of the western ‘Children of the Mist’—or from its connexion with the *mysteries* of Druidical superstition, for it has the largest basin on the moor, hence designated by the aborigines

‘Mistor pan’—I will not pretend to decide) like Kit hill. And then, as did a neighbouring Baronet on Kit hill—some future admirer of the picturesque, instead of the majestic blocks of granite, ‘tier above tier,’ might erect a puny fortification, with round towers, which, when the turf that was used in filling it, is swollen by the next rain, will burst and show the ignorance of the engineer that constructed it.

“I have often heard my father say, that there were stones enough on Dartmoor to build all the cities of Europe. I am almost afraid to mention it, lest the suggestion might be adopted; but should the Macadamizing system, now so much the rage, be changed for the Roman mode of making roads, which was by paving them with large blocks of stone, (and these should seem particularly appropriate for railroads) Dartmoor would furnish an almost exhaustless supply. Should these *clearings* be thus fully realized, it is hoped that an opposite mode of doing so to that of America would be adopted; and that, in clearing it, not of wood but of stone, they will hide their devastations by clothing them with trees. It may be hoped, too, that, in the centre of the moor, (where they should have begun these spoliations, and not have thus injured the beautiful scenery on its outskirts, which *cannot* but be seen, and which is heightened by being contrasted with that of cultivation,) they will leave at least one tor in all its rude magnificence of nature. Indeed, I am not sure but that they might have added to, instead of diminishing from, the interest of the scene, by quarrying underground, and forming catacombs. I must confess that I have often wondered and lamented that there are no natural caves or caverns among the tors of

Dartmoor, nothing that deserved any other name than mere fissures. These might be thus supplied; and mines too might be thus discovered, and thus might they have also found a low level to unwater them. I certainly should not wish to form a colony of troglodytes, which would be worse than gipsies, from whom, till lately, we were pretty free: but these excavations might afford occasional shelter from the storms; and might enable men to work at all seasons, even in the depth of winter; for they would not be prevented by snow, provided they kept the entrance free from it. Nay, snow might even contribute to their warmth, as it is preservative of the vegetable world in the winter. Who knows but, in time, the catacombs of Dartmoor may be as famous as those of Egypt? We already may be said, by our tors, particularly Vixen Tor, to have her sphinx and her pyramids.

“The fifth tor (which I believe is Little Kingtor) I did not visit, though the rail-road wound around it: for, as my time was drawing short, I beckoned to my servant to bring on the horses, and returned by the circles near Merrivale.

“Tuesday, the 24th of May, 1831.—In the morning there was a thick fog, but, thinking it was only for heat, I resolved on resuming my excursions on the moor, though at the risk of being torrifed amid the tors. The day before, there had been a great deal of thunder, accompanied with rain, which more than usually attracted my observation from falling in very large drops. There were still some symptoms of a stormy atmosphere; but I ventured. The road immediately ascending to the moor was so cut up by the floods of rain that rushed from it as to resemble

the bed of a torrent. A geologist might have studied from it the mode of alluvial formation. At the bottom of the descent there was nothing but mud, then a layer of sand several inches thick, and above, large stones, and the very foundation of the road laid bare.

“I proceeded to that part of the rail-road which I had before quitted, and found this also had not altogether escaped the effects of the late storm. After tracing it for some distance up a kind of rising valley, I observed a tor, apparently of no great magnitude, at my right, and determined on visiting it. Meeting with some workmen, I inquired the name of it, and was surprised to learn it was *Swell* tor, which, of course, I concluded was the same I had been told before was *Swill* tor. I still, however, had my doubts, and inquired the name of the next, which they said was the Inclined, or Inclined Plane tor; by this I found that they made no scruple to vary, and even completely change the names of these tors. No wonder, then, among the South Sea islands; that some call it Otaheite, and others Tahiti. For, if not Polynesian, in these my Polyorean researches, I could seldom meet with two persons who gave me the same names. Nor do I wonder at navigators mistaking one island for another, when I made the mistake of ascending one tor for another, though I had been on it but a week before. Some allowance, however, may be made for me, when it is remembered that according to the side by which you ascend, most tors assume a very different appearance. And thus may we conceive the facility with which navigators have often mistaken an island for part of a continent, and *vice versâ*. I may here, perhaps, be allowed to

allude to the difficulty they are under when they sometimes see a strange sail at a distance, to decide whether it be a friend or an enemy; and at the absurd mistakes they often make in consequence.

“ On ascending the hill from Merrivale bridge, I observed some kind of vehicle taking a most unusual direction from the road, apparently among the Druidical circles, or rather the cursus. I certainly did not take it for an ancient British chariot, not only because it moved but slow, but also because it had a head, or awning. I almost fancied it a cargo of antiquaries, or at least a party of pleasure come to explore the antiquities of the spot, but, on approaching nearer, I found it was a cart laden with hay. On returning to the rail-road, I hesitated whether I would not pursue a branch of it that led to a quarry in the side of a hill under Hessory tor. I was somewhat desirous to discover whether it was worked open or excavated, particularly as it coincided with my theory that there was no necessity to demolish the tors themselves; but the fog was again coming on, and I thought it more prudent to curtail my excursion.

“ Near this branch road is a long shed, in which, from the sounds that came from it, I had reason to believe that many were employed in hewing into form the blocks that had been brought from this quarry. And indeed I could not but conclude that it afforded harder and larger masses than those I had visited on the summits of the tors, as I saw some immense columns lying near, which, I understood from one of the workmen, were to be employed in the construction of some market in London. About a mile farther on, I found some other parts of columns of the same dimensions. The distant tors on the right, towards

the south, seemed more closely clustered, and of a bolder and more abrupt form than what is generally met with on the moor. The new Plymouth road winds among them. The rail-road, which, at last, nearly joins it, brought me to the Prison.

“The fog had become more dense, and was carried by the wind in large flakes, so that on seeing them approach, I at first almost mechanically closed my eyes, as I should against flakes of snow or clouds of dust; but as they approached they vanished into thin air. I soon joined the Moreton road, and returned to Tavistock.

“The *first* spoliation (if I may so call it) of the moor, was, as I have heard from my father, about seventy or eighty years ago, when a young man of this place, on the expiration of his apprenticeship, gave a kind of fête champêtre on the moor, and they amused themselves with throwing down such rocks as were nicely poised, (some of which, perhaps, were a kind of logan rock,) and having drunk punch in some of the Druidical bowls, took a pleasure in afterwards breaking them. The *second* spoliation was that occasioned by removing from Crockerntor the rude table of granite, around which the members of the Stannary Court sat when they there held their parliaments. The spoliation that is *now* going on is on a far larger scale, and, alas! can never be replaced as was the logan rock in Cornwall.

“I could almost wish that Don Miguel were again in England, (though I would confine his tyranny to the tors,) as I cannot help thinking that these *free masons* deserve more punishment than those of Portugal. Perhaps, however, I am more severe upon this fraternity than they deserve, as I lost by them

an inscribed stone, and a few days ago was on the point of losing another, which they had marked out for a corner stone in the wall they are erecting in front of the Vicarage."

So concludes this portion of Mr. Bray's journal. I will not now add more than the assurance that

I am, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

ANNA E. BRAY.

LETTER XVII.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Excursion to the Warren in search of the King's Oven—Arrival at an old house called an Inn—Invitation to the traveller held out in verse—Romantic adventure—Derivation of the word Merrivale—A search after antiquities under a broiling sun—Ridges of stones—Circular barrow seventy-six paces in circumference—The King's Oven found—Probably a place used by the aboriginal inhabitants of the moor for their barbarous cookery—A circle—A stone cross—Curious remains of a British bridge examined and described, found near a circular enclosure like Dennabridge pound—Visit to Fitz's Well on the moor—The structure above the well proved not to be so old as, by mistake, it has been represented—Not older than the time of Elizabeth—Account of the well, with the tradition respecting its history as connected with the pixies and Sir John and Lady Fitz.

Ficarage, Tavistock, May 26th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

My next extract from Mr. Bray's Journal will yet detain you on Dartmoor: it gives an account of our excursion to the

WARREN, &c.

"27th July, 1831.—Accompanied by my wife, I set out in search of the King's Oven, the name of which certainly excited more than ordinary expectations. On reaching New House, formerly an inn, I inquired of a female who was standing at the door, if there were any room in the stable for my horses. Her reply was that the stable was full of turf, by which she meant peat. We had come fourteen miles,

in an extremely hot day ; but, anticipating no great accommodation for them, I had brought corn, and therefore directed my servant to lead them about, and to feed them in the best manner he could.

“ Had the stable been empty, it could afford, I believe, but little accommodation at the best, and the house itself, even in its better days, though it held out an invitation far more magnificent than the usual one, ‘ Entertainment for man and horse,’ would perhaps have little exceeded that which is celebrated in poetry as the death-scene of the profligate Lord Rochester, who is described as having died ‘ In the worst inn’s worst room.’ The inscription, I am told, on the sign, which I think I must have seen myself when a boy, was, as well as I recollect,—though, as I doubt not it was ‘ spelt by the unlettered muse,’ could give it *verbatim et literatim*—

“ Here is cider and beer,
Your hearts for to cheer.
And if you want meat
To make up a treat,
There are rabbits to eat.”

“ New House (which Hannaford, when he mentioned to me that the King’s Oven was at no great distance from it, seemed to consider a misnomer, for he said he believed it was one of the oldest houses on the moor) is surrounded by a warren, which thus afforded an easy opportunity of fulfilling at least the latter part of the above promise, and they probably were able to give a Welsh rabbit into the bargain. Having provided ourselves with sandwiches, in a kind of cartouche box, which originally, however, was made for botanizing, and a pocket pistol, vulgo a small bottle of brandy, (for I would not have my

readers expect any perilous adventures with banditti,) I made no lamentations on the absence or entire annihilation of most of these eatables and drinkables, but contented myself with inquiring of the representative of the ci-devant landlady, which was the way to the King's Oven. She hardly seemed at first to understand the question, and indeed was evidently altogether so uninformed, that I was satisfied she was not the person whom I thought I possibly might find there, and of whom I had heard the following story.

“A common pack-horse driver, or carrier, was in the habit of putting up at a public house on St. David's hill at Exeter, which, indeed, was a pretty general rendezvous for persons of this description. They there, over their beer, amused themselves with singing. Whether the person above alluded to sang the loudest or the sweetest, I know not, but his voice was so pre-eminently distinguishable from that of his companions, as to attract the attention of the daughter of a clergyman who resided near. I presume not to say who made the first advances: it is clear who made the first impressions. The result, however, was that she married him, and he took her as his bride to this same house in the very heart of the moor. I made no inquiry about her of its present inhabitant, as I thought she was as little likely to give any information on matters connected with romance as with those of antiquity.

“On asking, however, if she had never heard that there was anything curious to be seen in the neighbourhood, she said that she had lived there no more than two years, but that once a pedlar entered the house, and, remarking how much it was out of repair,

and that perhaps the wisest plan would be to pull it down, advised her, if such should be her resolution, to build it on a spot the other side of the road, where a foundation for a similar purpose had been already laid, or at least the ground dug out for it. He said it was in a line with the corner of their field near the *mire*, by which I afterwards found she meant the bog.

“And here, at the risk of being charged perhaps with digression, I must mention, that on previously passing Merrivale bridge, and, farther on, Higher Merripit and Lower Merripit, I had ventured to account for the name of these places, by supposing it derived from *miry*, corrupted into *merry*. They all, especially the two latter, are near a bog. And thus, if she were not the means of *giving* me information, she was, as not unfrequently happens, the means of my *gaining* it, or at least of confirming my own opinion, which, I believe, with most is considered *equivalent* to information. Though her curiosity had never led her there, she was good-natured enough, however, to assist in gratifying mine, and offered to accompany us to the spot which she thought was meant by the pedlar. When I arrived there, however, I was as wise as before, for I knew not whether I was to see a mound or a cavity, and of each of these there were many, as we were evidently surrounded by the ‘old workings’ (as they are called in Devonshire) of a tin mine, which had subsequently been converted into a warren. The day was extremely hot, and, as my companion was tired and almost fainting with the heat, I resolved (though to think of then looking for an oven seemed

somewhat a work of supererogation) to go in search of it alone.

“Sometimes thinking of the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, and sometimes of King Arthur’s Oven, which I believe is a kind of cromlech in Scotland, I rambled about with an umbrella over my head in search of I knew not what. I thought also more than once of a wild-goose-chace, and was almost induced again and again to give it up; but tempted by the pleasure of exploring unknown regions, I persevered.

“As I ascended the hill, I perceived some ridges of stone, which, whether they were the remains of inclosures or tracklines, I could not tell. I found on an elevated point of view what seemed like the King’s broad arrow, which appeared to have been but recently made in the turf. And had it not been so long ago, I could have fancied it one of those marks made during the trigonometrical survey by direction of the Ordnance under Colonel Mudge. Soon after, I came to something like a small rude circle, with what might have been an erect stone or pillar, but now fallen, and, whether by lightning or otherwise, split, longitudinally and laterally, into four parts, in pretty nearly equal proportions. Advancing farther, I observed the outline of the summit of the hill somewhat rough with stones and rushes, and, hastening towards it, found, as I conclude, the object of my search.

“It is a circular barrow composed of small stones, seventy-six paces in circumference. Its form approaches but little to conical, being, I should think, but three feet high. I saw on it no lichen or moss,

which is generally found on structures of this description that have remained in their original form, and I therefore should conclude that many of the stones have, at a comparatively late date, been carried away. It can boast of almost a panoramic view of considerable extent, particularly towards the north-east and south. Near it is a kind of trench, about six feet long, with a shorter, meeting it at right angles in the centre, the sides of which are lined with stone. And in the same direction are several pits, and one in particular of some extent in the shape of an inverted cone.*

“ On our way homeward, a little before we came to Merripit, I observed a circle on my right hand intersected by the road ; and a little farther on to the left, on the other side of the road, a stone cross, nine feet and three quarters long, now fallen, and lying near a circular pit. Its arms are very short, but the whole is of a more regular shape and better wrought than such crosses as are generally found on the moor.

“ At Post Bridge, I got out of the carriage to measure one of the flat stones of that structure, which I found to be fifteen feet by five and a half. These immense slabs are supported on four piers, at either extremity one, two having originally been in

* It is not improbable this was really the King's Oven, or used for the purpose of baking by some British chief—since it was a custom with the people of Britain as well as of Gaul, to dig a *deep pit, line it with stones*, and make the stones hot by burning heath or wood upon them. In similar pits, says the editor of Ossian, “ they laid venison at the bottom, with a stratum of stones above it, and thus did they alternately till the pit was full: the whole was covered with heath to confine the steam.” Near these holes or pits there was generally also found a “ heap of smooth flat stones of the flint kind,” used perhaps for baking bread.

the centre, of which one is fallen, and now lies in the bed of the river. It was probably erected by the aboriginal Britons, and might almost be taken for the work of the Cyclops themselves. On passing over the new bridge, near which is another cross, close to the road, I observed at some distance to the right a circular inclosure, somewhat similar to what I suppose was the foundation of Dennabridge pound."

The next extract from Mr. Bray's Journal is an account of a visit to

FITZ'S WELL, ON DARTMOOR.

"August 10th, 1831.—Having many years since attempted to find Fitz's, or, as it is generally called, Fice's well, by crossing the moor from Bair-down, when my horse, on getting into a bog, so trembled in every limb, that I gave up the search, and, from some circumstance or another, never resumed it; I determined, this day, to renew my investigations.

"I directed my course to the house on the moor, near Rundle stone, where a female offered to guide us to the well. We proceeded in a northerly direction, along the eastern bank of the leat that conveys the water to the prison. After we had gone about half a mile, we turned off at a right angle, following the direction of what appeared to be an old hedge or part of an inclosure, at no great distance to the left of which we reached the well, not, however, without some of the party getting wet in the feet, as it is nearly in the midst of a bog. It is situated on a gentle declivity, near Blackbrook, (over which, a little lower down, is an ancient foot bridge,) the edifice about the well consisting of flat slabs of granite; the cover being three feet ten inches, by

three feet three inches. The height of this rude structure is about three feet. The well, according to Carrington's work, 'measures three feet square by two feet and a half deep.' On the front edge of the cover is the inscription, which I hesitate not to say is given very incorrectly in the vignette of his book.

"I am willing, however, to make every allowance to the artist, as he possibly might labour under similar disadvantages to myself, if not even greater; for the whole was in shadow, whilst the sun shone bright behind it. Had it been at noon, or an hour or two previous, for it faces nearly east, it would have been partially illumined, and the shadow of the letters, which are in relief, would have assisted in decyphering them. But I am sufficiently convinced that the letters I F are *not* reversed, but in their natural order; and that instead of being 1168, it is 1568.

"I think it most likely that Fitz's well was constructed by John Fitz, the old lawyer and astrologer of Fitz-ford; whose traffic with the stars, in foretelling the fate of his only son, is still the theme of tradition.

"John Fitz, the elder, was, if I may so express myself, a water-fancier as well as an astrologer; for he built the conduit-house at Fitz-ford; and I have in my possession his autograph. It is thus written: John Fytz; and appears on the counterpart lease of a field, giving him liberty to convey water 'in pipes of timber, lead, or otherwise,' to his mansion-house at Fitz-ford. It is dated the 10th of Elizabeth. Now Elizabeth began to reign 1558, and the structure called Fitz's well on Dartmoor was, as we have seen, erected in 1568 "

Since Mr. Bray wrote the above notes in his Journal, I have learnt from Mary Colling, who is well acquainted with all the traditions of her native town, that the following is still told by the elders of Tavistock, respecting Fice's Well.

John Fitz, the astrologer, and his lady, were once *pixy-led*, whilst riding on Dartmoor. After long wandering in the vain effort to find the right path, they felt so fatigued and thirsty, that it was with extreme delight they discovered a spring of water, whose powers seemed to be miraculous; for no sooner had they satisfied their thirst, than they were enabled to find their way through the moor towards home, without the least difficulty. In gratitude for this deliverance, and the benefit they had received from the water, old John Fitz caused the stone memorial in question, bearing the date of the year, to be placed over the spring, for the advantage of all *pixy-led* travellers. It is still considered to possess many healing virtues.

I have the honor to remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours, &c. &c.

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

LETTER XVIII.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

CONTENTS:—Southern hills of Dartmoor eleven hundred feet above the level of the sea—Luminous evaporations there seen—Tin mines—Grey granite; of what composed—Manganese found near Moreton-Hampstead—Devonshire marbles beautiful; their formation—Slate remarkably beautiful—The various uses to which applied in this county—Extraordinary carved slab of slate—Slaters called Helliars—The earth often of a bright red—Crystals found in it—Black garnets—Spar, where found—Loadstone on Dartmoor—Prideaux' Geological Survey quoted respecting various parts of the Moor—Brentor, its curiosity and geology—Black-downs, a primæval mountain tract—Convulsions of nature have been great on the moor—Shock of an earthquake there felt—Full account of the storm and its awful effects, at Widdecomb, in the year 1638—Carrington's lines on it given—Low towers of the churches on the moor—Botany, wherefore here but slightly noticed—Value of some knowledge of drawing; easily attained—The golden blossom of the furze magnificent in Devon—Admired by Linnæus—May-blossoms—The digitalis, or foxglove grows in the greatest luxuriance—Whortle-berries—White clover—Wild flowers; some of the poetical names given to them by the peasantry—Provincial names for the birds, &c.—Mr. Polwhele's account of the entomology—The finny tribe—Trout excellent—Salmon plentiful—Reptiles—The long Cripple-Snake and Toad seen together—Story of a remarkable toad—Lizards—Adders common on the moor—The Bat abundant in the ruins of an old tower in the Vicarage garden.

Vicarage, Tavistock, June 1st, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

On looking over the notes I have made for these Letters, I find several respecting Dartmoor, that are of so miscellaneous a nature that I do not know very well how to throw them into any connected form; and yet I think they contain infor-

mation on some points that ought not to be passed in silence. Will you, therefore, admit a letter which must, I fear, be little better than a string of unconnected paragraphs: for in what other way can I give you such notes as the following?

I find that the southern hills of that immense waste called Dartmoor are about eleven hundred feet above the level of the sea; and that luminous mineral evaporations and ignes fatui are commonly seen in the valleys and hollows of the moor in dark nights: 'some of these,' says Polwhele, 'are like balls of light rising about five feet from the earth, then falling back and rebounding.' In former times the mines were numerous; at present very few are worked, though it is conjectured that this vast tract is rich in its subterranean product of metals and ores. Tin mines are amongst these, particularly in the parish of Sampford-Spiney; and some years ago the sexton, whilst digging a grave in the church of Whitchurch, near Tavistock, struck into a lode of tin. I have in these Letters repeatedly mentioned the grey granite which so much abounds on the moor. This consists of white felspar, black mica and quartz. It is remarkable that no sort of granite is more readily rough-hewn, and none with greater difficulty brought to receive a polish. Iron is found in it, and a large vein of that metal was discovered in the Sampford-Spiney mine. In the fissures of the granite there are seen, also, two varieties of tin, *Stannum crystallis columnaribus nigris*, and *Stannum amorphum ruforigricans*. Manganese is found in abundance near Moreton-Hampstead.*

* Polwhele's Devon, passim.

Our Devonshire marbles, of which the most beautiful chimney-pieces are wrought, are too celebrated to need much notice in this letter. The Drewsteignton marbles are chiefly black, or of the richest dark blues, and elegantly veined; they are capable of receiving the highest polish, and are sometimes found spotted with shells or other fossil remains, so hardened as to form a part of the marble. Our slate, too, is very celebrated: it is often of so deep a grey, as to approach almost to black. Chimney-pieces, highly polished, are made of it. The Rev. Mr. Evans, of Park Wood, has in his house one of this description, so exceedingly beautiful, that, on first seeing it, I took it for black marble. Some of the finest quarries are in our neighbourhood.

This slate is very valuable, and with us it is used not merely for a general covering against the weather, but for various other purposes. We have a hearth in our kitchen of one entire slab, that measures eight feet in length by four in breadth. In Devon it is often used for tombstones. When we visited the church of Launceston in Cornwall, about two years ago, we saw lying against the wall of the churchyard part of a memorial of this description, which ought to have been carefully preserved in the church itself, as one of the most curious and beautiful specimens of *carving in slate* perhaps in the whole kingdom. The arms and supporters of the deceased, the crest with many flourishing decorations, and the whole style of ornament, declared it to be a work of the time of Henry VIII. when simplicity was getting out of fashion. This broken slab of monumental slate, for the sharpness

and perfection of its execution, and the delicacy of its finish, was equal to any sculpture I have ever seen in marble; and when we consider the brittle nature of the material in which it is wrought, there cannot be a doubt that, as a work of art, it is one of great value and curiosity. From the situation in which it stood when we saw it, I should fear that, in a few years, it will be totally destroyed. Slaters with us still retain that antique name by which, if I remember correctly, they are distinguished by Chaucer; for here they are called *helliers*, and the slate roof of a house is termed the *helling*.

But our granite, marbles and slate, are not the only productions of the earth for which we are famous: the earth itself is deserving notice for the vast variety of its tints, and the richness they add to the landscape. I need not tell you, who have been at Exeter, how brilliant is the red earth of that neighbourhood, and that it is always considered the best and most productive*. Rougemont castle in that city derives its name from the colour of the soil on which it stands and the stone of which it is built. Mr. Polwhale mentions that crystals are found in it; and that the earth in which diamonds are discovered at Golconda is of the same nature.

Crystals, also, are sometimes seen on Dartmoor amongst the granite. In Sampford-Spiney above

* Even in Otaheite it is so; for there we learn, by the accounts of recent travellers, that the poor savages have a tradition that the first man was made out of the *red earth* of a certain mountain. On my mentioning having read this to Mr. Bray, he remarked how much this tradition of a savage nation accorded with the Mosaic account of the creation; since the word *Adam*, the name of the first man, in the Hebrew signifies *red earth*.

one thousand were discovered "being all of a short thick column, with tapering pyramidal ends." These are very rare in England. "They are always met with in parcels in the same place, generally detached and single, though sometimes a few of them cohere together; they are beautifully transparent, and of extreme brightness." Semipellucid columnar quartz crystals are frequently found in the fissures of the Dartmoor granite; and the black garnet is discovered at Moreton-Hampstead, like schorl crystals, and the amorphous minutely granulated black schorl. We have, also, on the moor, a compact species of spar that bears a fine polish and is capable of being worked the same as marble. I observed, a few days since, several rocks of this description rising two or three feet above the surface of the ground, near Holwell, on Whitchurch down. "In Devonshire," says Risdon, "is found the miraculous loadstone, not discovered in this island till the sixteenth century: the loadstone, though of an inferior kind, has been found on Dartmoor." According to Prideaux, some of the hills, or mountainous tracts of the moor, attain a height of nearly two thousand feet; the valleys, though they run in various directions, nevertheless have a tendency to the north and south. The hills are most elevated towards the borders, where the granite seems of a harder and closer texture. The colour here and there varies, though its general appearance is grey, yet is it found "from almost black with schorl, to pure shining white, and some occurs of a rich red, superior in beauty to any Egyptian granite, particularly where it contains tourmaline." It is metalliferous, tin being common; copper is sometimes found. The granite, though

rich in schorl, is poor in mica, consequently containing less magnesia, and the more subject to the operations of the weather from that cause. The line of granite from the town of Tavistock to Heytor may be pretty accurately traced by the copse, which clothing the declivities of the slate-rocks that abut against it, disappears suddenly on the gritty soil. Cocks-tor is a mountain of trap, which runs in a northerly direction to Whiter-tor and Brazen-tor, "it is almost pure horn blende, in different degrees of compactness, and consequently of specific gravity." At Cocks-tor and Whiter-tor it is seen in contact with clay slate, at Brazen-tor with granite. This slate is likewise observed on the western sides of the first-named tor, where it comes in contact with the trap. This preserves its laminar structure; it has assumed the aspect of flint, and gives fire on receiving a blow from the hammer. In some places it is become riband jasper, but finer as a mineral*.

Mr. Bray noticed in a former paper, that Brent-tor was considered by geologists to be a volcanic production; and as there is evidence of the action of fire on the moor, so likewise is there of water. Alluvial tracts are here and there displayed; and though the nature of the primary granite rocks cannot be doubted, yet it is the opinion of Polwhale that vast fragments of stone so widely scattered every where around, or piled in the rudest heaps, clearly indicate some terrible wreck of a former world. The eminence, for instance, which arises above the logan stone at Drewsteignton, displays the boldest and the most marked vestiges of the great flood. It is

* Prideaux's Geological Survey, *passim*.

the same in other parts, particularly near Heytor rock—there “the hills are broken up or strangely rounded. The rocks along the sides of the hills are smoothed by the waters, or shattered by the force of the torrent: whilst an infinite number of pebbles are dashed around these abrupt masses. The valleys have on one spot an even surface, but gravelly and sandy. On another, they are ploughed up into the wildest irregularities: all around, indeed, the very entrails of the earth are laid open. These were not common floods; they were such as might divulse the whole strata of the hills, wash away the substances that had been accumulating for ages, and bring others instantaneously into their place.*” An intelligent correspondent of the same author observes—“that the convulsion which produced the mountain tracts of Blackdown and Haldon, raising themselves, perhaps, partly, if not wholly, from the sea, was not enough to throw off all their superficial strata from the clay-stones and shells that remain on them; they may, therefore, be called alluvial mountain tracts. But the convulsion being stronger that formed the heights of Dartmoor, all superficial strata were thrown off, and the granite, which is considered as a primæval stratum, appeared. This stratum has nothing upon it but a thin vegetable mould that it has since collected. This, therefore, in the language of a geologist, may be called a primæval mountain tract.”

That Dartmoor has experienced, at different periods, many convulsions of nature cannot be doubted by those who have examined with attention the features of that most interesting waste. The

* Polwhele's Devon.

last convulsion of any extraordinary character occurred in the year 1752, when, on the 23d day of February, a smart shock of an earthquake was felt at many places on the moor, and in its immediate neighbourhood—Manaton, Moreton-Hampstead and Widdecombe. In the last-named village some houses were injured, and one of the pinnacles of the tower of the church was thrown down. Widdecombe, indeed, seemed destined to suffer by the convulsion of the elements. The most fearful of these sufferings was alluded to in an extract from Mr. Bray's old Journal, given in a former letter. It deserves, however, a more particular notice; and the following account, founded on the authority of Prince, will, I trust, be not altogether devoid of interest, though it relates to a most melancholy subject.

On Sunday the 21st of October, 1638, whilst the Rev. George Lyde was performing the evening service in his church of Widdecombe, he was suddenly surprised by such darkness that he could with difficulty proceed in his duty. This was followed by intermitted peals of thunder that sounded afar off like the discharge of artillery. The darkness so increased, as the tempest drew nearer, that the congregation could scarcely see each other; and whilst the hurricane raged without in fearful violence, the choristers sang one of the psalms in praise of Him "who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind, who hath His way in the whirlwind, and in the storm." At length the whole face of the heavens became covered by dense and black clouds, and all was dark as midnight. In a moment this was fearfully dispersed, and the

church appeared to be suddenly illumined by flames of forked fire. According to Prince, these terrific flames were accompanied with smoke, and "a loathsome smell like brimstone." A ball of fire also burst through one of the windows, and passed down the nave of the church, spreading consternation in its passage.

Many of the congregation thought it the final judgment of the world: some fell on their faces, and lay extended like dead men upon the ground; others beat their breasts, or cried aloud with terror; many wept and prayed. The reverend Pastor continued in his pulpit, amazed by this event, yet by Divine Providence unharmed himself, though a sad spectator of the dreadful sufferings around him. His wife was scorched by the lightning, but her child, seated by her in the same pew, received no injury. A woman, who attempted to rush out, was so miserably burnt, that she expired that night. Many other persons, likewise, in a few days after, died from the same cause. One unhappy man had his skull so horribly fractured, that the brains were found cast upon the pavement in an entire state. "But the hair of his head," says the chronicler of this event, "stuck fast to the pillar near him, where it remained a woful spectacle a long while after." Several seats were turned upside down, yet those who were on them received no injury. One man, on rushing out at the chancel, saw his dog, that ran before him, whirled towards the door, where the animal fell down dead. On seeing this, the master stepped back, and his life was preserved. A beam from the roof fell between the pastor and his clerk; neither was injured. So violently was the tower of the church shaken, that

vast stones were tost from it, as if from the destroying hands of "an hundred men." A pinnacle of the tower, in its fall, broke through the roof, wounded many, and killed a woman. The pillar against which the pulpit stood became black and sulphurous; yet, though thus surrounded by danger on every side, the undaunted minister of God never forsook his station; and, in reply to a proposal made by some one present, that all should venture from the church, he exclaimed, "Let us make an end of prayer, since it is better to die here than in another place!"

The affrighted congregation, however, seeing the building so fearfully shaken and tottering above their heads, dared not remain; and Mr. Lyde was left to finish the prayer, with the dead and the maimed around him; four persons being killed, and sixty-two grievously burnt by the lightning, or wounded by the falling of the stones. Carrington thus alludes to this awful visitation in his poem of "Dartmoor:"—*

* The wildest tales respecting this storm, so severely felt in Widcombe church, are still the theme of tradition with the peasantry of Dartmoor. One story is, that the devil, dressed in black, and mounted on a black horse, inquired his way to the church, of a woman who kept a little public-house on the moor. He offered her money to become his guide; but she distrusted him, on remarking that the liquor went hissing down his throat, and finally had her suspicions confirmed by discovering he had a cloven foot, which he could not conceal even by his boot. Another version of the story says, that the compact being out which the devil had made with some wicked youth, he had the power to seize him, even in the church, if he there found him sleeping. On his way through the churchyard, the Evil one overturned some boys he found playing at marbles upon the graves; and finding his victim sleeping in the pew as he expected, he caught him up by the hair, flew with him through one of the windows, and knocked down the pinnacle, that did so much mischief in his flight. There are many other adventures told concerning the devil in this exploit; but these are the principal. Bishop Hall, in his admirable

"Far o'er hill and dale
 Their summons glad the Sabbath-bells had flung ;—
 From hill and dale obedient they had sped
 Who heard the holy welcoming ; and now
 They stood above the venerable dead
 Of centuries, and bow'd where they had bow'd
 Who slept below. The simple touching tones
 Of England's psalmody upswell'd, and all,
 With lip and heart united, loudly sang
 The praises of the Highest. But anon,
 Harsh mingling with that minstrelsy, was heard
 The fitful blast ;—the pictured windows shook,—
 Around the aged tower the rising gale
 Shrill whistled ; and the ancient massive doors
 Swung on their jarring hinges. Then—at once—
 Fell an unnatural calm, and with it came
 A fearful gloom, deep'ning and deep'ning, till
 'Twas dark as night's meridian ; for the cloud,
 Descending, had within its bosom wrapt
 The fated dome. At first a herald flash
 Just chased the darkness, and the thunder spoke,
 Breaking the strange tranquillity. But soon
 Pale horror reign'd,—the mighty tempest burst
 In wrath appalling ;—forth the lightning sprang,
 And death came with it, and the living writhed
 In that dread flame-sheet.

"Clasp'd by liquid fire—
 Bereft of Hope, they madly said the hour
 Of final doom was nigh, and soul and sense
 Wild reel'd ; and, shrieking, on the sculptured floor
 Some helpless sank ; and others watch'd each flash
 With haggard look and frenzied eye, and cower'd
 At every thunder-stroke. Again a power
 Unseen dealt death around ! In speechless awe
 The boldest stood ; and when the sunny ray

sermon "Of the Invisible World," ascribes many storms to the agency of wicked spirits ; and mentions that of Widdecombe as an instance.

I have seen it mentioned in the Quarterly Review, that the Ettrick Shepherd, in one of his tales, makes the devil be discovered by the wine hissing down his throat whilst drinking. This is a very remarkable coincidence with our Dartmoor tradition ; which is not, I will venture to say, known beyond this neighbourhood.

Glancing again on river, field, and wood,
Had chased the tempest, and they drank once more
The balmy air, and saw the bow of God,
His token to the nations, throwing wide
Its arch of mercy o'er the freshen'd earth,
How welcome was that light—that breeze—that bow!
And oh how deep the feeling that awoke
To Heaven the hymn of thankfulness and joy!"

Though storms attended with thunder and lightning are by no means common on the moor, yet, when they do occur, they are of a nature so terrific, that every one must acknowledge the mercy of Divine Providence in not suffering them to be more frequent. Were I to repeat to you the notices of such storms given by various writers, no spot of earth, of like extent, in this kingdom, could, perhaps claim so fearful a record as the forest of Dartmoor. The towers of the churches in this neighbourhood are by no means lofty, and spires are unknown. Possibly this circumstance may be the result of design; the wisdom of our ancestors might have suggested the necessity of erecting low towers in a region of high lands and mountainous tors, where any very elevated buildings perched upon them would have become as points of attraction to the clouds surcharged with the electric fluid. This, however, is a subject I leave to be discussed by those who are much better acquainted with it than myself.

It is not my intention in these letters to say any thing concerning the botany of the moor. I am too ignorant of the subject to write about it, and even if I possessed the knowledge that is requisite for such a task, it would be unnecessary; since Mr. Polwhele, in his 'Devon,' has given a most copious account of all its plants, both common and rare. Another con-

sideration, also, makes me less anxious on this point. It is that you have truly observed in your Colloquies, that botanical books are only of interest to botanists. You are not, I believe, particularly partial to that science; and few readers are so. Should these letters, therefore, ever go farther than Keswick—should they go into the hands of any one who might be curious on such a point, I have stated where that curiosity may be most amply satisfied. The few remarks I have to offer respecting the wild products of the soil are such as would strike any one who, in early life, like myself, has been fond of the pencil; and who consequently acquires a feeling for, or, as artists term it, an eye for the picturesque; an eye which becomes the inlet to one of the most innocent, delightful, and lasting pleasures of human life; a pleasure (and I speak it from experience) that renders the spirits, in hours of health and peace, as light as the air we breathe; that can cheer the mind, and revive the body after sickness; that has a power even to soothe grief, to tranquillize the vexations of worldly cares; and, above all, that fills the whole heart with the best and the most grateful feelings towards that Divine Providence, who has every where spread around us such a world of beauty and variety, for the solace, the delight, and the service of his creatures.

It is on this account, therefore, that even the slightest knowledge of drawing becomes so valuable; since it teaches the young student to see a thousand minute beauties of light, shadow, form, and colour that would escape an uncultivated observer. And this is the reason why I would have all young persons taught to draw, the same as they are taught to write; since, though it requires talent to make a good

artist, and genius to form a great one, yet I am persuaded that there are few, if any, so dull, but that they may be taught to imitate the forms they see before their eyes, even the same as they learn to write the alphabet; and when I add that on venturing to make this observation to Mr. Stothard, sen., the historical painter, he concurred in such opinion, it will be found not unsupported by a very high authority.

During the Spring in our neighbourhood, and, I believe, in most parts of Devon, nothing can exceed the gorgeous display made by the golden blossom of our furze. It is said that when Linnæus was in England he was more struck with the magnificent appearance of this wild furze than with any other of our native plants. It grows most abundantly on tracts of waste land, by the side of roads, and on certain portions of Dartmoor. Near Moreton-Hampstead it is seen so thick and splendid, that it might be compared to an embroidery of gold on velvet of the richest green. I have seen this furze, when skilfully managed by a tasteful artist, introduced with good effect in foregrounds; where, like the rich opposition of colour in the pictures of Titian, it contrasts finely with the deep and ultra-marine tints of the sky and the distant tors. Our May blossoms, too, growing on the thorns in the hedges, are exceedingly luxuriant, and beautifully clustered. And scarcely does the yellow blossom of the furze disappear, when there comes forth in such abundance as I have never seen in any other county, that most elegant of all wild flowers, and most delicately painted in its bell, the *Digitalis*, or Foxglove; or, as the peasantry here call it, the Flop-a-dock. The height

to which these plants grow in Devon is extraordinary. I have seen many hills so covered with them, that thus viewed in combination they have produced an effect truly magnificent; especially where some of our noble ferns interposed to add that variety of form and colour so essential to the picturesque. The white foxglove is an exceedingly rare plant even here, where I have always understood botanists find so choice a field for their pursuits: it is found on Dartmoor. In Somerset and Devon, the common people use a decoction of it as a most powerful emetic; too powerful, I should think, to be taken with safety.

Whortleberries are both fine and plentiful on some parts of the moor. They are delicious (somewhat resembling in flavour the American cranberry) when made into tarts and eaten with that luxury of all luxuries, the clouted, or, as we call it, scalded cream of our delightful county. The heath-polt principally feeds on the whortleberry that grows wild on the moors. Round the tors of the forest the finest white clover springs up spontaneously; and no doubt this in a great degree renders the moor so excellent in the pasture it affords the sheep.

Though I have confessed my entire ignorance of botanical subjects, which I regret, I can tell, nevertheless, many of our wild flowers by the names that are prevalent among the peasantry. Some of these it may be as well to mention, since they are of antique date. And who would do other than look with an eye of interest on the pretty flowers that were chosen by Ophelia to form her 'fantastic garlands,' as she strayed by the 'glassy stream' under the willow that grew 'ascaunt the brook?'

“There on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke ;
When down her weedy trophies, and herself,
Fell in the weeping brook.”

We have here ‘crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long-purples,’ and many other plants whose names are as ancient, as poetical, or as fantastic ; for here, too, the ‘long-purples’ are called ‘dead-men’s fingers.’ And poor Ophelia herself might have sung snatches of old tunes, as she formed garlands from flowers so wildly called as ours. We have the *maiden-hair*, a pretty pendent plant for her ‘coronet ;’ and the *lost-love* that would have reminded her of Hamlet ; and the *shepherd’s calendar*, and the *one o’clock*, the very dial of poetry ; and the *cuckoo-flower*, that opens its little pink buds at the time the bird from which it borrows its name does his note. And we have, too, the *snap-dragon*, as varied and as beautiful as any garden flower. And the *thor-mantle*, excellent as a medicine in fevers ; and the *cat’s-eyes*, that are as blue as ether, with a little white pupil in the centre ; and *bright-eye*, with its glossy leaves ; and *mother of millions* with its numerous small drooping flowers ; and *honesty*, whose bells hang like open purses by the side of its stem. *Milk-maidens* are little white flowers that grow in the meadows, or on the banks of running streams. And Love supplies many with his name ; for we have a plant called *seven years’ love*, and *love entangled*, a wild picturesque flower that grows on the tops of old houses ; and *love in a puzzle*, a delicate plant with leaves resembling in colour the wings of an early butterfly. We have also the blue *hare-bell*. The harmless nettle is here called *archangels*. And indeed we have a vast

variety of others that speak in their very names the imaginative and poetic character of our forefathers in this lovely county.

As we have provincial names for the plants, so have we likewise for the birds. A grave naturalist would smile did he hear some of these. That beautifully-feathered bird, the yellow hammer, which I can never meet without delight, as he spreads his wings and mounts and flutters aloft, is here known by no other name than the one which so truly expresses his character—the *gladdy*; and it does, indeed, glad one's very eyes to see him. And then when I open the postern gate in the old Abbey walls at the end of the garden, and look out upon the foaming Tavy and its rocks, there I meet a pretty little fellow skimming over them, or dropping his wings and resting a moment, and constantly wagging his fan-tail of black and grey feathers over the old stones; an action which has procured for him the name of the *dish-washer*. And we have, too, the *mazed finch*, a truly Devonian appellative, given to one species of this tribe in consequence of its wild and incessant motion. We have, also, as the little boys here say,

“The robin red-breast and the wren,
God Almighty's cock and hen.”

And then we have birds called by as compound epithets as if the good folks who gave them had studied Homer. For we have the *ox-eyed tit-mouse*, a little bit of a bird not bigger than a wren, with a breast as white as snow. We have, likewise, the *heck-mall*, a busy bird, and fond of making himself comfortable: a hole in an old apple tree, or a snug cell in the Abbey wall that some loosened stone has

left for him, are to him as a palace; and there he lives as happy as a more ambitious bird amongst the loftiest rocks, even as

“The lordly eagle sitting in his chair.”

The *hoop* is a bird of the same family, who makes more noise than he does work; and being somewhat choice in his dwelling, he selects an old hole that is well sheltered with ivy. The *furze chatterer*, it is probable, admires our golden bushes, from which he takes his name, as much as did Linnæus himself, since he regularly frequents them; and there, if he is not to be seen, he is constantly to be heard; and, like most great talkers, repeats the same note over and over again. We also have a bird called *black-headed Bob*, a merry fellow; and well does he deserve his name; for whilst his bill is not idle in picking up what he can, his head bobs about from side to side, with a motion as perpetual as that of a Chinese jos. Part of his family are aristocratic, for the *black-winged duke* is certainly of his kindred; but whereas *Bob* carries all his sable colours, like a black-plumed warrior, upon his head, the *duke* displays his sables more like a mantle, about his back and wings. The *stone-knocker* is the very mason of his tribe: he is fond of rivers and mountain streams, and will peck, peck the very granite with his bill, till he finds a hole to his taste, and then he makes himself happy and brings home his love.

Knowing little about entomology, I have had recourse to Mr. Polwhele, to see what help he could give me; and as common insects are not grand enough to be named after such a catalogue as *Bob* and his kindred have afforded in the feathered tribe,

I shall only say that Mr. Polwhele declares of insects, he is acquainted with none here which are not common to other counties, unless it be the stag beetle, and the mole cricket. He gives a very full and curious account of both these insects. And here I may observe that the cricket's cry, which, I believe, in all other counties is considered a cheerful and a welcome note, the harbinger of joy, is deemed by our peasantry ominous of sorrow and evil. The *Phalæna Pavonia*, or emperor moth, has been seen sporting and showing his magnificent wings on the boundary walls of the Abbey in our garden*.

I must not venture upon any account of the finny tribes; for so little did I know about them, that till I read 'Walton's Angler' (which almost made me long to go a fishing myself in our streams) I scarcely knew what kind of fish inhabit rivers only, and not the seas. And having no taste for fish, it is merely by the report of others that I can assure you our trout is as fine as trout can be; and that the rivers on the moor abound with them in such plenty, that good old Izaak, or your friend Sir Humphry Davy, would have delighted to throw a fly along its banks. We have, too, salmon in abundance; and we have, likewise, the old story, common to all salmon countries, namely, that the 'prentices' in former times used to make it a part of the bargain in their indentures not to be obliged to dine off salmon more than five times a week.

Our reptiles, saving one, are known by their general names, none having provincial ones, except-

* A beetle of the most rare kind has been lately discovered in the woods of Walreddon, about two miles from Tavistock. It is said to be the only specimen of this peculiar sort that has ever been found in England. I made a note of its name, &c., but have mislaid it.

ing the snake, and he is called the *long cripple**; but why or wherefore is more than I know. Toads we have in abundance; they principally frequent the pools in this county. I remember a fine fat one, that was long an inhabitant of a hole under the ancient still-house of the Abbey in our garden; and so fearless was he, that in my favourite walk to this spot, he would pop out of his hole, squat himself down in the middle of the path, and look at me as if he were a sentinel keeping watch before the old tower. He had very large bright eyes; and was, I can vouch from long acquaintance, as beautiful and as civil as a toad could be. Mr. Bray once observed one of these reptiles under a hedge with a monstrous snake coiled round him, but if to exert his powers of fascination upon the poor toad, or to do battle with him, he could not determine. Mr. Polwhele gives a curious account of a toad that inhabited a hole before the hall door of a Mr. Arscott of Tedcott, in this county, which, during the space of thirty years, was a familiar friend with that gentleman, and would feed from his hand.

We have several species of Lizards. The *eft* and the *long cripple* are also common here; and as to vipers, only take a ramble on Dartmoor on a very hot day, and you will see more of such reptiles than, I will venture to say, you have ever seen before, or would wish to see again. I never venture there without putting on a good pair of stout boots; and I would advise all my female friends, who may be enthusiastic in search of the picturesque, to follow my example; since the finest scenery of the moor is to be found amidst the wild and hidden valleys, and the broken rocks, where vipers most abound. To go

* Perhaps from long *creeper*.

among them as guarded as possible against being bitten will be found a necessary precaution*.

I now, I believe, have named our principal reptiles. Under what class the bat is to be ranked I do not know; for though it has wings it is not a bird; and as it does not crawl it can hardly be called reptile. But I mention it here because the remains of the Abbey, beautifully hung with ivy, abound with the finest bats I have ever seen. They sometimes come into our house; and one, with a noble pair of horns, (that reminded me of the horn-head dress worn by the ladies in the time of Henry IV., when they were obliged to heighten the doors at court to give them free passage,) we caught at night; and as I wished more particularly to examine it by daylight, I put my prisoner into the warming pan, to secure him for that purpose. Next morning, when I gently raised the lid, no bat was to be found; and as nobody knew any thing about the matter, it was settled by universal consent in our kitchen, that either a *pisgy* had 'let he out,' or that with his horns he had pushed up the lid and effected his own escape, or that, worst of all, a certain dark personage, whose nightly operations are still devoutly believed in by many of the Devonians, must have had some hand in the business.

And, now, having written you a very long letter, and much about trifles, allow me to conclude, with every respectful feeling,

My dear Sir, most truly and faithfully yours,

ANNA E. BRAY.

* The labourers on the moor, particularly the peat-cutters, may be said to swathe their legs with ropes of straw, to guard against the vipers.

LETTER XIX.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

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CONTENTS.—Vestiges of ancient customs still found on the Moor—Sacred solemnities of the Druids to Bel, or the Sun—Bel Tor the scene of ancient rites—May-fires in Cornwall and Devon—Druidical or British custom respecting Cattle, formerly observed on the Moor—Vestige of the sacrificial rite to the God Bel—Cuckoo's note, an omen—Lines on the Cuckoo—May-day in the West of England—The Hobby-horse; its high antiquity—Conjecture respecting its being a vestige of the Sacred Horse, &c.—Horses, as sacred offerings, so considered by many nations of antiquity—a vestige of such offerings found in chivalrous times—Examples given—The Druidical Festivals of the West—That of Godeo—The British Ceres—Harvest—The curious ceremony still observed by the Reapers, near Dartmoor, at the end of the Harvest, described as witnessed by the Writer—Conjectured to be the vestige of a British custom—Plants held sacred—Herbs—Charms—Old Women generally perform the rite—Two Charms in barbarous rhymes given—The Apple tree—Old custom of saluting it—The last of October, the great day with the British Priesthood—To beg fire, in former times, at the doors of the rich, on that day, once practised by the Peasantry of the West—Now extinct—Old Midsummer Day—Cattle pounded—Decay of ancient customs on the Moor—An interesting Letter from the Reverend Thomas Johnes on the Animals of the West, given at large.

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Vicarage, Tavistock, June 9th, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I purpose giving you, in this letter, some slight account of the few vestiges of those ancient customs which still linger in their decay, not only on Dartmoor, but throughout this neighbourhood. My

reason for introducing them here, is, that I consider they derive their origin from British times.

Many of the sacred solemnities of the Druids were observed on particular days. Amongst these was the festival of the god Belus, or Bel, on the first of May. I have before noticed that on the Moor we have *Bel-tor*, commonly pronounced by the peasantry *Belly-tor*; thus adding the vowel to the termination of the word, as they do in the name of the forest itself, which they often call Dartemoor: it is, perhaps, the ancient pronunciation, for we find Chaucer accents the *e*; when speaking of a native of a Devonshire town, he says

“For that I wot he was of Dartemouth.”

I have no doubt that on May-day, sacred to Bel, or the Sun, his *tor* on Dartmoor exhibited all the rites and ceremonies due to the worship of that god. There on its summit, in all probability, the cairn fires were kindled, as victims were immolated, and the earliest fruits and blossoms of the earth received the benediction of the priest. It is not improbable, that the spring season of the year was chosen for the high festival of the Sun, in order to celebrate his renewed power, since he might then be considered as beginning to dispense his warmer beams to raise the seeds of the ground in promise of the future harvest. Many august ceremonies were likewise observed on May Eve. Toland gives a very curious account of the *Beltan fires*, that in his time were still kindled on a heap of stones, called a kairn, in many parts of Ireland, whilst the peasantry danced and sang around the flames.

In the counties of Cornwall and Devon, “May

fires" were long numbered amongst the sports of May-day, though, I believe, in *our* county they are now fallen into total oblivion. So likewise is that very ancient custom with the peasantry of the Moor, to collect together a quantity of straw, to pile it up on one of the heaps of stone, and then setting fire to it, force their cows to pass over the expiring embers in order to make them fruitful in milk, and to preserve them from disease during the rest of the year. As nothing has been heard of this custom of late years, I conclude it is extinct: but can there be a doubt it was a vestige of the sacrificial rites to the god Bel? And this opinion is confirmed by the circumstance of the Druids sacrificing on May Eve a spotted cow. "It was the season in which British mythology commemorated the egress from the ark; the place where this cow was sacrificed afforded rest to the deified patriarch, who is here styled Ysadawn, the consumer*."

The cuckoo's note was hailed by the British priesthood as the harbinger of the sacrifices of May Eve. With the Devonians the cuckoo is still an ominous bird; since to hear him for the first time on the left hand—as I did this year—is considered a marvellous sign of ill luck. Some unlettered muse of our county has thus, truly enough, expressed his peculiarities in rhyme.

In the month of April,
He opens his bill;
In the month of May,
He singeth all day;
In the month of June,
He alters his tune;
In the month of July,
Away he doth fly.

* Davies's British Mythology.

May-day is still celebrated in the West of England, though not so gaily as it used to be some years ago, when I have heard my husband say, the milkmaids of this place would borrow plate of the gentry to hang upon their milk-pails, intermixed with bunches of riband and crowns of flowers. It is, I believe, universally allowed that no custom has a higher claim to heathen antiquity, than the erection of a May-pole, garlanded with flowers, as the signal-post of mirth and rejoicing for the day. These May-poles have, I believe, of late years, experienced some change: in former times they were often stationary; now, we generally see only the verdant pyramid crowned with flowers. This pyramid joins the procession, and sometimes even the dance; it receives its motion from having concealed within it a good stout fellow; strong and tall enough to perform the part for the day. Jack in the Bush is his name; and he has existed (so am I told) as long as the May-pole itself.

Robin Hood, St. George and the Dragon, Maid Marian, the Hobby-horse and the Ladle, have long been forgotten with us, though once so famous in the West. Yet I cannot pass the mention of the Hobby, without venturing a conjecture of my own respecting his origin, which differs from the generally received opinion. The antique Hobby (like the present May-pole) was formed by a man being dressed up, so as to disguise his humanity, with a pasteboard head, resembling that of a horse, decorated with a real mane, and the performer could also boast a real tail. He was, in fact, made to look as much like a four-footed animal, as a biped could possibly be made to do. Ribands, gilt paper, and gaudy flowers were

disposed about him by way of decoration, and the ladle stuck in the mouth of the horse, received the donation pennies of the boys and girls, to be spent in keeping up the sports. 'This Hobby was very gay and gorgeous, and hence have we, in all probability, the common saying of "as fine as the horse," to express extravagant decoration in the dress of an individual. This is the grotesque figure to which Hamlet alludes when he exclaims "Heigho! the Hobby-horse is forgot," and well might he do so, for it was falling into neglect even in the days of Elizabeth, though it survived in the West longer than in any other part of the kingdom.

Now this May-day Hobby, with all submission to the learned, I cannot help thinking, has a claim to much higher antiquity in its origin than they are pleased to assign to it; and that it is nothing less than a vestige, or figure rather, of the *sacred horse*, dedicated to Bel, the god of the Sun, on the first of May, by the British Druids. The custom, no doubt, came from the East, as did most customs of the Celtic nations. Dedicating horses to the Sun is spoken of even in the Bible; where we are told that the good King Josiah, who destroyed the groves of the idolatrous priests, took away the *horses they had dedicated to the Sun*. Tacitus, also, in describing the manners of the ancient Germans, mentions the neighing of the *sacred horses*, as being consulted for the purposes of divination by priests and kings. The Saxons, before their conversion to Christianity, devoted horses to Odin, as a more noble offering than that of pigs, sacrificed to Frea his wife. And, however impatient the Roman Catholics may be at the mention of it, there is nothing more certain than that

many of the customs and ceremonies of their church were borrowed from the idolatrous rites of the ancient heathens. That custom, so frequent in the ages of chivalry, of offering at the altar the horse of the victor, in all probability derived its origin from pagan antiquity. Many instances of such offerings might be cited; one or two will here suffice.

Setting aside the mischievous tendency of the superstitions connected with the Church of Rome, its rites and ceremonies were often of an imposing character, though they stirred the imagination more than they affected the heart. There must have been something very noble in such sights as were presented by the offerings in question: when Philippe de Valois, for instance, after a great victory, entered the cathedral of Notre Dame fully armed and mounted on his war-horse, as he moved slowly on, surrounded by the solemn assembly of priests and warriors, whilst emblazoned banners waved above his head, and the flame of a thousand tapers glanced amidst column and fretted arch, to offer up his arms and his horse to "Our Lady of Victory." So likewise at the funeral of the valiant Gaston Phœbus Count de Foix, his horse and arms were solemnly offered at the altar of Orthes, and were afterwards redeemed for a large sum in gold.

To return to the Druidical festivals of the West. That we have still some vestiges of that sacred to Godo, the British Ceres (so frequently mentioned in the ancient poems of the bards), whose rites were observed at *the time of harvest*, cannot, I think, be doubted. And as I have myself witnessed these, I can speak with more confidence on the subject.

The following few particulars will be found not unworthy the notice of the antiquary.

One evening, about the end of harvest, I was riding out on my pony, attended by a servant who was born and bred a Devonian. We were passing near a field on the borders of Dartmoor, where the reapers were assembled. In a moment the pony started nearly from one side of the way to the other, so sudden came a shout from the field, which gave him this alarm. On my stopping to ask my servant what all that noise was about, he seemed surprised by the question, and said "It was only the people making their games as they always did, to the *spirit of the harvest*." Such a reply was quite sufficient to duce me to stop immediately; as I felt certain here was to be observed some curious vestige of a most ancient superstition; and I soon gained all the information I could wish to obtain upon the subject. The offering to the spirit of the harvest is thus made.

When the reaping is finished, toward evening the labourers select some of the best ears of corn from the sheaves; these they tie together, and it is called the *nack*. Sometimes, as it was when I witnessed the custom, this nack is decorated with flowers, twisted in with the reed, which gives it a gay and fantastic appearance. The reapers then proceed to a *high place* (such, in fact, was the field on the side of a steep hill where I saw them) and there they go, to use their own words, to "holla the nack." The man who bears this offering stands in the midst, elevates it, whilst all the other labourers form themselves into a *circle* about him; each holds aloft his hook, and in a moment they all shout, as loud as

they possibly can, these words, which I spell as I heard them pronounced, and I presume they are not to be found in any written record. ‘Arnack, arnack, arnack, *wehaven*, *wehaven*, *wehaven**.’—This is repeated three several times; and the firkin is handed round between each shout, by way, I conclude, of libation. When the weather is fine, different parties of reapers, each stationed on some height, may be heard for miles round, shouting, as it were, in answer to each other.

The evening I witnessed this ceremony, many women and children, some carrying boughs, and others having flowers in their caps, or in their hands, or in their bonnets, were seen, some dancing, others singing, whilst the men (whose exclamations so startled my pony) practised the above rites in a ring. When we recollect that in order to do so the reapers invariably assemble on some *high place*, that they form themselves into a *circle*, whilst one of their party holds the offering of the finest ears of corn in the middle of the ring, can we for a moment doubt this custom is a vestige of Druidism? The

* “*A knack*,” says Fosbroke, “is a curious kind of figure, hung up and kept till the next year.” Thus we have in Shakspeare—“*A knack*, a toy, a trick, a baby’s cap.” I venture, also, to consider that “*Wehaven*” is a corruption of *wee ane*, a little one, or child. See Johns. Dic., *wee*. For this note, and the following, I am indebted to Mr. Bray. He suggests that *Pixy* may be derived either from *pix* or *pax*, possibly both, as these words have been confounded by no less a lexicographer than Johnson. *Pix* signifies “a little chest or box, in which the consecrated host is kept in Roman Catholic countries;” and *Pax* “a sort of little image, a piece of bread, having the image of Christ upon the cross on it; which the people, before the Reformation, used to kiss after the service was ended, that ceremony being considered as a *kiss of peace*. ‘Kiss the *pax*, and be quiet with your neighbours.’ Chapman’s Comedy of May Day (1611).”

man so elevating the offering is, in all probability, no other than the successor of the priest, whose duty it was to offer up the first and best fruits of the harvest to the goddess who fostered its increase, as his brother priests formed about him that *circle* which was held sacred in the forms and offices of religion ; and I cannot but conclude that we have not throughout the whole kingdom a more curious rite, derived from Pagan antiquity, than the one just mentioned that I witnessed on the borders of Dartmoor.

I do not here allude to the mode of charming adders with the ashen bough or wand, still practised on the moor ; because I have before spoken at large on that subject. A few other customs, though less striking in their character, merit some attention, as they all help to throw light on that obscurity which involves the earliest ages in the history of this part of England.

We know from ancient writers that the British priesthood held sacred many plants, herbs, and trees. Their reverence for the all-heal, or miseltoe, is too universally known to require being noticed here. But it is not a little remarkable that the common people of Dartmoor, and, indeed, throughout all this neighbourhood, hold in great reverence many herbs, which they use to cure divers diseases, accompanying their applications, even as did the Druids, with sundry mystical charms in barbarous verse. Though I had attempted to get some of the old women to repeat to me these charms, I never could succeed with them ; and never should, had it not been for Mary Colling. The reason was this : the lower orders entertain an idea that if once these charms get, as they say, 'into a printed book,' all their effi-

cacy will be for ever destroyed. The good old souls, therefore, when I questioned them (having previously taken it into their heads that all I heard would go into print) would not risk a charm in my hearing. With Mary they were less suspicious, and by her means many of their charms stand at this hour in jeopardy. Nothing can be more barbarous than the rhymes that compose them; and these are used over many of their decoctions from herbs that are really medicinal. The names by which such decoctions and herbs are known would puzzle a better botanist than I shall ever be; since who, for instance, would ever guess what was meant by *organ's tea*, an excellent potation for a cold, and here much in request. Other names equally strange could I repeat, if by any possibility I could guess what letters of the alphabet when put together would produce any word to express a similar pronunciation of uncouth sounds.

I have been charmed myself, though against my will, by the good-natured assiduity of an old servant, who, when I was suffering from inflammation in the eyes, determined to cure me by one of these heathenish rites. Mr. Courtenay, of Walreddon House, in this neighbourhood, was also charmed, for the same complaint, by an old woman who exercised her skill upon him without his permission; and as he has never since been troubled with his old disorder, the cure is duly ascribed to successful magic by the vulgar.

Divested of their superstitions, we have, indeed, in this town and neighbourhood many useful elderly women, who act not only as charmers, but as nurses; and who, with a little more instruction, might be-

come as servicable as that most praiseworthy and respectable of all the religious orders of the Church of Rome—the Nuns of Charity; an order so eminently useful, that every one will join with you in wishing that some lady, who had talents and influence sufficient to carry it into effect, would lead the way for a similar order being established in this country on a Protestant foundation. To return to our good old women. The charms which they hold in such estimation are carefully handed down from one generation to another. This is done by a woman communicating the secret of these mysteries to a man, or a man to a woman, as the most likely means of preserving them in their full efficacy; now and then, however, they tell the secret to one of their own sex. Here is a barbarous string of rhymes to stop an effusion of blood:

“Jesus was born in Bethlehem,
Baptized in river Jordan, when
The water was wild in the wood,
The person was just and good,
God spake, and the water stood
And so shall now thy blood—
“In the name of the Father, Son, &c.”

If a man, or woman has been injured by a scald or burn, then shall the charmer place her hand gently on the hurt, and in a soft voice shall say:

“Three angels came from the north, east, and west,
One brought fire, another brought ice,
And the third brought the Holy Ghost,
So out fire and in frost.
“In the name, &c.”

But these are Christian charms, grafted, no doubt, on heathenish superstitions. There are others, however, more decidedly of Pagan origin.

The apple-tree, brought into this country by the Romans, was soon held in almost sacred estimation by the Britons; it is frequently referred to as symbolical by the Welsh bards*. Probably the reverence that was paid to it might have arisen from the miseltoe being found to grow upon it, as well as upon the oak†. On Christmas-eve, the farmers and their men, in this part of the world, often take a large bowl of cider with a toast in it, and carrying it in state to the orchard, they salute the apple-trees with much ceremony, in order to make them bear well the next season. This salutation consists in throwing some of the cider about the roots of the trees, placing bits of the toast on the branches; and then forming themselves into a ring, they, like the bards of old, set up their voices, and sing a song, which may be found in Brand's Popular Antiquities‡.

The last of October was, however, the principal, and, indeed, the most terrific day of all Druidical festivals: and truly may it also be called one of

* Hywell, the son of Owen, thus sings:—"I love in the summer season the prancing steeds of the placid-smiling chiefs; in the presence of the gallant Lord who rules the foam-covered nimbly-moving wave. But another has won the token of the *apple spray*, and Gwalchmai thus sings:—"The point of the *apple-tree* supporting blossoms, proud covering of the wood, declares—every one's desire tends to the place of his affections.'"—*Davies's Bards*.

† On reading this letter, Mr. Southey had the kindness to make the following note:

"Miseltoe is so rare upon the oak, that a reward was offered for discovering it there some five or six and thirty years ago, by the Society of the Adelphi, I believe. It was found (and the prize obtained for it) at a place called the Boyse, in Gloucestershire, on the borders of Herefordshire, and there I saw it."

‡ Brand mentions the custom of saluting the apples as still practised in Cornwall and Devon. He gives two of the songs thus:—

craft; since on that day every person was compelled to extinguish all fire in his house, and come to the priest in order to obtain from him a consecrated brand, taken from the altar to renew it. But if any begged this, without having previously paid whatever might be due to the priest, it was denied to him, and the terrific sentence of excommunication pronounced. This sentence consigned the miserable defaulter to a lingering death from cold and hunger. His cattle were seized; he had no fire to cheer his home, or to dress food for his subsistence, or to warm him in the depth of winter, whilst surrounded by frosts and snows. No friend, kindred or neighbour, was allowed to supply him with fire, under pain of incurring the like cruel sentence. Never, surely, did an idolatrous priesthood invent a more certain or more cruel means of enforcing their extortions.

To beg fire at the doors of the rich on the last day of October, when the gift was generally accompanied by some trifling donation in money, I have somewhere read, was, with the poor, formerly a custom in the western parts of England, as well as in Wales. It is now, I believe, wholly extinct. But

“Here’s to thee, old apple-tree,
Whence thou may’st bud, and whence thou may’st blow!
And whence thou may’st bear apples enow!

Hats full! caps full!
Bushel—bushel—sacks full
And my pockets full too! Huzza!”

The other song runs thus:

“Health to thee, good apple-tree,
Well to bear, pocket-fulls, hat-fulls,
Peck-fulls, bushel-bag-fulls.”

This last is, I understand, the song of this neighbourhood on observing the custom.

on old Midsummer-day, the farmers of the moor ride about, and lay hands on all the stray cattle or sheep they can find; these are consigned to the Pound; and they receive so much per head for all thus found.

The decay of ancient customs on Dartmoor is mainly to be attributed to what are considered its improvements. The chief amongst these was the erection of the French prison. I have been told it was calculated to contain ten thousand prisoners; if this statement is correct or not I cannot say. The building, also, of Prince Town, Tor Royal, the mansion of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, and other habitations belonging to persons of property and influence, are all things that have helped to civilize the peasantry of the moor, and to root out, in a great degree, their ancient superstitions; though, I believe, in no part of England has the march of intellect marched at a slower pace than on the moor. Many of its inhabitants cannot read; they speak the broadest Devonshire; but are, in their general character, a simple and honest race, and as hardy as the aboriginal inhabitants of the soil.

Having now endeavoured to give you a general idea of a place so little known in an historical and topographical view as Dartmoor, I hope in my next letters to conduct you to Tavistock and its vicinity, where, I trust, I may find some subjects not altogether unworthy your attention. Sincerely thanking you for allowing both Mr. Bray and myself thus far to be your guides over the moor,

Permit me to remain, my dear Sir,

With much respect, very truly and faithfully yours,

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

P. S.—MY DEAR SIR,—Since writing the above, I have been favoured with some few particulars respecting our animals in this neighbourhood, from a friend who is well known amongst us on account of his talents and worth—the Rev. Thomas Johnes, Rector of Bradstone, Devon. This gentleman, for whom we entertain a very high regard, to the pursuits of a scholar unites those of a naturalist, and has a feeling command of his pencil in the delineation of our scenery. Whenever you honour us with a visit at Tavistock, we hope to take you to his house, that you may see his beautiful collection of birds. These he stuffed himself, and in a manner superior to any I ever yet saw elsewhere; for he has been most happy in giving such a position to each as best to convey an idea of the action of the bird. Many of them are very beautiful: one hawk I particularly remember, with its prey; it looks as if it had at the instant darted upon it and grasped it in its talons.

Mr. Johnes thus begins his letter to me:—"At last I have summoned resolution to send you the long-promised account of the animals of this country. I anxiously hope that you will not be disappointed; and I am sure you will treat me with all due consideration when you reflect how confined and hackneyed is the subject which I have handled. * * * * The different species of four-footed animals, natives of this country, are so few in number, and for the most part so familiar to the sight, that a particular description of each, or a lengthened detail of their habits and manners, would be superfluous.

"The effect of that variety of soil and climate, which is a striking peculiarity of the district you have undertaken to describe, is most conspicuous in the

breeds of domesticated quadrupeds: the wild sorts preserve their distinctions of size and form pretty constantly wherever they are found in this kingdom. Having first noticed the few varieties of domestic quadrupeds which are the produce of this district, I shall add such remarks on the others as are furnished by my own observations and the experience of credible friends.

“The Dartmoor pony is usually about twelve hands and a half in height, coarse in its form, but surprisingly spirited and hardy. The late Edward Bray, Esq., of Tavistock, reared great numbers of these horses, which were disposed of at an annual sale held on the moor. Since the death of that gentleman the breed is become almost extinct.

“The North Devon breed of oxen, in great purity, is the common neat stock of this country. Its excellence consists in the superiority of its fattening quality. Heifers or cows of three and four years old are preferred for feeding; and they are fit for the market in the short period of twenty weeks. They are not much esteemed for the dairy, yielding but a small quantity of milk, and not of the richest quality. There is great symmetry in their form, and an appearance of high breed, but they are apt to be too long in the legs, and too flat in the ribs.

“The Dartmoor sheep, which produces the well-known Oakhampton mutton, is a small breed weighing about fourteen pounds per quarter. They are kept on the moor during the summer, and the cheapness of their feed, which amounts to twenty pence a score for that season, and from seven to nine pence for the winter, makes it profitable to the farmer to keep large flocks of them principally for the sake of

their wool, which averages seven pounds a fleece. Their superior flavour may be ascribed principally to the nature of the animal, and partly to the circumstance of their being killed at a more mature age than is usual in other places:—by no means can it be attributed to the herbage of the moor, which is exceedingly coarse and deficient in nourishment.

“The red deer, called in Devonshire the forester, or forest deer, was once abundant in the extensive woods on the banks of the Tavy and the Tamar, and many packs of stag-hounds were kept in the neighbourhood*. The hall in the manor-house of Bradstone is still adorned with the trophies of this glorious chase, the skulls and horns of the forester forming an appropriate series of metopes round that ancient room. But it is long ago extinct. A solitary straggler now and then visits us from the north of Devon: one was seen in the woods of Hornacott Manor, on the banks of the Tamar, in the spring and summer of 1831.

“The otter is an inhabitant of all the rivers in this neighbourhood. The river Ottery, or Ottry, which rises in the parish of Otterham, and falls into the Tamar at Werrington, is supposed to derive its name from the numbers of these animals formerly found in it. The hunting of the otter is hereabouts a favourite and agreeable summer sport. It is necessary to

* So numerous were the red deer in this immediate neighbourhood, that the late Mr. Bray often mentioned that he could recollect, in the time of the present Duke of Bedford's grandfather, the farmers petitioned his grace to get rid of them, on account of the injury they did to the crops. The Duke sent down his stag-hounds from Woburn, the finest chases took place, and the deer were extirpated. So glutted was the town with venison at the time, that only the haunches were saved, and the rest given to the dogs.

commence at or before day-break, as the animal seldom moves in the day-time, and the heat of the sun quickly exhales the scent. It is a hardy and wary creature, very tenacious of life; and success in this sport can only be insured by men and dogs who have been long and well trained to it. Its couch is formed in the bank of a stream, and the access to it is under water: there is a vent-hole for air at some distance on the top of the bank; here it deposits its young, four or five in number. It weighs from eighteen to twenty pounds, though some have been killed weighing thirty pounds. The north Teign is at present the favourite resort of the otter, simply because it abounds in fish, which are not hindered from coming up from the sea by weirs, as is the case in most other of our rivers.

“The polecat, foumart, or fitch, is found every where hereabouts, but particularly in the neighbourhood of the large marshes, or as they are very properly called, *mires of Dartmoor*: where, besides rabbits, rats, and birds, it preys on frogs and lizards; and even the remains of fish have been found in its lair. This was first noticed by Bewick, and it was confirmed by an old gamekeeper on the moor, who thought this curious circumstance was first remarked by himself. All the animals of this tribe, from the stear to the weasel, are fond of the neighbourhood of water; the sable is known to be amphibious, and a variety of this species, an inhabitant of North America, mentioned by Pennant, has obtained the name of *the fisher*.

“Since the preservation of game has been attended to in this neighbourhood, the martin cat and others of its kin have become scarce. This weasel is of a dark brown colour, and the throat and belly are

white, which distinguishes it from the pine weasel, whose breast is yellow. The latter animal, though rare in this kingdom, was not uncommon a few years ago in the plantations of Mr. Carpenter, in the parish of Milton Abbot.

“The stoat, vair, or vairy, is the commonest of the weasel tribe. The most remarkable circumstance concerning it is its winter change of garb from brown to white, when it is called the ermine. This change is not universal in our latitude, as brown stoats are found in the winter, and others with various degrees of white. The change commences at the lower part of the sides; and the last part which turns white is the forehead. It is singular enough that the males are most subject to this change, a female white stoat, or ermine, being considered a rarity by the warreners.

“There is a pretty variety of the squirrel found hereabouts, which differs from the common sort in having the tail or brush and the pencils of the ears of a yellowish white. I hear they are common about Kingston Hall, in Dorsetshire.

“Of the fox, there are two sorts natives of this country—the greyhound fox and the cur fox. The greyhound fox is found on Dartmoor, where it is known by the name of the wolf fox, and has sometimes been met with of an extraordinary size. One killed there a few years since, when stretched out, measured five feet from the middle claw of the fore foot, to the tip of the middle hind claw. A friend of mine, in this neighbourhood, had a tame vixen fox of the cur sort chained up about a hundred yards from his house. During the first spring of her confinement she was visited by a dog-fox, and in due season brought forth six cubs. The male appeared

fully sensible of the captivity of his mate, and with very substantial gallantry supplied her with abundance of food, as the items of her larder for one night will show.

One full-grown hare ;
Eight young rabbits ;
Six moles.

What a supper ! He seems never to have meddled with feathered game, though the neighbouring covers abounded in pheasants. The same thing was repeated in the following spring.

“The badger is common, and used here for the cruel sport of baiting. Its skin is exceedingly thick and tough. I once dissected a badger which had been baited for three days, during which it killed several dogs, and was at last itself killed by a large mastiff ; yet I could not detect a single perforation of the skin, though there was a great deal of extravasated blood, pointing out the parts which had suffered most from dogs. Its stomach contained only moles’ fur. The badger is the fox’s pioneer—the latter seldom, perhaps never, digging a hole for himself. When pressed for an habitation, he fixes on the hole of a badger, and ejects the owner by a certain nameless process, most offensive to the delicate senses and cleanly habits of the badger.

“A keen sportsman of this neighbourhood has made an ingenious use of the instincts of these two animals in order to stock his preserves with foxes. He tethers a badger to a suitable spot in his plantations where he soon digs a convenient domicile, the badger is then removed, and a young fox put in full possession of the kennel.

“We have two kind of rats, the water-rat and the brown Norway rat.

“It was remarked more than two hundred years ago by an historian of the adjoining county* that, ‘of all manner of vermine, Cornish houses are most pestered with rats; a brood very hurtfull for devouring of meat, clothes, and writings by day; and alike cumbersome through their crying and rattling while they daunce their gallop gallyards in the roofo at night.’ This was said of the black rat, which has been exterminated by the brown or Norway rat, of which we may truly say that it comes not a whit behind its predecessor either in daily rapine, or in the provoking cumbersomeness of its gallyarding by night.

“We have mice—the dormouse, house mouse, shrew, called here the *screw*, the field-mouse, and the short-tailed field-mouse.

“I have noticed three species of bats; the short-eared bat, which is greyish dun; the long-eared bat, and a small bat with black nose and legs, and the fur of a reddish cast.

“The hedgehog is common. It is the same calumniated and ill-used animal here as in other places. And thus much for the quadrupeds of this district. The birds are more in number, and of greater variety and rarity. They will form the subject of my next communication.”

So concludes Mr. Johnes; and as I have a short notice to add, from Mr. Bray’s Journal of this year, respecting a few vestiges, not hitherto mentioned, on the moor, I propose to send them with the copy of the bird letter, above promised, at some future opportunity. In the interval,

Allow me the honour to remain, &c. &c.,

A. E. BRAY.

* Carew’s Survey of Cornwall.

LETTER XX.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

 CONTENTS.—The Birds of Dartmoor, &c. &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have great pleasure in now being able to convey to you the following interesting letter, which I have just received from the Rev. Mr. Johnes, on the birds of this district.

“TO MRS. BRAY.

“DEAR MADAM,

“The Tors of Dartmoor, lofty though they be and desolate, are yet too accessible to afford shelter to the eagle or its cyrie. Dr. E. Moore of Plymouth indeed mentions a pair, which built some years since on Dewerstone rock, in Bickleigh Vale, but he speaks from report only. The osprey, or bald-buzzard, is the only bird of this tribe known in Devonshire, where it is supposed by good ornithologists to be more frequently met with than in any other part of England. The common buzzard frequents the sea-coast in great numbers, where it breeds in the cliffs. The honey buzzard occurs but rarely; it has, however, been noticed on Dartmoor. The moor buzzard is not uncommon. About August they are frequently found hawking about the cultivated lands, and near farm-houses. It is affirmed that kites were common in this district forty or fifty years ago. At present they are so rare, that I have never seen one

alive; and but one, a very beautiful specimen, in the collection of the late W. Baron, Esq., at Tregear*. I was told that they were frequently found in that neighbourhood. The goshawk is admitted into the Fauna of Devon, on the authority of Dr. Tucker of Ashburton, who says it has been found on Dartmoor. The sparrow-hawk is one of the few hawks which do not migrate, but stay here all the year. I have not noticed the hen-harrier, or the ring-tail (its female), in the winter months. The country people call it the furze-kite.

“The kestrel, called here the wind-fanner and wind-hover, from its motion when hovering over the same spot in search of its quarry, comes in great numbers in the spring to breed in the lofty rocks of Morwell and Cartha Martha. In the latter place more than fifty have been shot during one summer. Some few remain all the year. I have dissected many, and have never found any thing in the stomach but a small green lizard, which I have not been able to find alive. The hobby, called in falconry the lady’s hawk, comes here in the spring, and builds in our woods on the tops of high trees, but is not common. This bird is a great destroyer of the lark, as noticed

* Mr. Bray, however, tells me that, about thirty years ago, a kite, having one of its wings clipped, was kept for several years in his father’s garden. It was fond of placing itself on the steps of the portico of the house, and not unfrequently, by pecking at their feet, alarmed such strangers as would enter it. The feathers of its wing having, through neglect, been suffered to grow, the bird was accustomed to mount the walls of the garden, and thence to dart at those who were in it: for some time, no greater injury had been effected. But at last, when Mr. Bray himself entered the garden, having perhaps become more daring from impunity, it took a lower flight, and would probably have struck him in the face had he not prevented it by knocking it down with his stick.

by Willughby. In the stomachs of two I found nothing but the remains of that bird. Hence it was called by Johnson *accipiter alaudarius*.

“The merlin is sometimes seen here in October, but rarely. It probably escapes our notice by its small size and quickness of motion.

“Of owls we have four sorts, one of which is migratory, namely, the short-eared owl; though I have found the long-eared owl only in the autumn and winter, and in the neighbourhood of moors. But Col. Montagu says they have been killed in summer.

“Of the short-eared owl I possess two specimens, a male and female. The male is smaller than the female. They are found, I believe invariably, on the ground in long grass, and young fir plantations. I believe they migrate to England only occasionally, and then in considerable numbers. I have neither seen nor heard of one for several years. It is called also the woodcock owl from the time of its appearance. The brown owl is found in woods and especially among rocks covered with ivy. It is common. The white owl, or barn owl: this beautiful bird is common, and a useful friend to the farmer, by whom it is usually protected. They fly in the day-time, and in the breeding season the quantity of mice they destroy is prodigious. They prey three hours in the morning, and three in the evening, during which time each bird brings to its young, at the very lowest calculation, twenty-four mice, making the sum of three hundred and thirty-six in the course of one week, besides what it destroys for its own food. This bird, as well as the brown owl, hoots. This fact is clearly ascertained.

“The ash-coloured shrike is so very seldom seen

in England, that it scarcely deserves to be called a British bird, but the red-backed shrike is common enough in the summer. It builds in hedges, frequently near a public road, and leaves us in autumn.

“Ravens, crows, daws, jays, magpies, and rooks are abundant in their several localities. The latter, though doubtless a useful bird to the farmer in general, yet in dry springs is quite a nuisance. Last year they almost destroyed the potato crops in the neighbourhood of a large rookery, by digging up the seed, which the looseness of the earth permitted them to do with ease. The Royston crow is found on the sea-coast in the winter.

“Starlings come here in September, and are found in company with the rooks in the beginning of the season. In December and January they are in vast numbers about the grass fields, but leave us in the latter end of January or the beginning of February. They do not breed hereabouts.

“The ring-owzel visits Dartmoor in April, where it breeds, and departs in the beginning of November. The cock is a very restless and wary bird. His spring call, which consists of two notes repeated four times with a short pause, is incessant; while the hen is sitting he sings mornings and evenings delightfully, and is then very daring. The nest is frequently found in the side of a turf tye, that is, a pit from which they dig turfs for fuel.

“The missel-thrush is common, and in August they are seen in flocks of from twenty to thirty in the fields where the beat (that is the slight layer of turf which is spaded off the land) is burnt, preparatory to ploughing for wheat. It is singular that so shy a bird should build its nest in such open and fre-

quented places. April 13, 1834, I found the nest of a missel thrush in the fork of a young apple-tree, about two feet from the ground, in an exposed situation near the road leading to the house. It was composed on the outside of the stems of couch and other grasses, a mixture of clay, a little moss of the apple-tree, and lined with hay. It then contained one egg. The bird continued to lay every day regularly between 9 and 10 in the morning until Friday the 18th, and immediately began to sit. On that day and the following it was restless, and easily frightened from the nest, but afterwards sat very close until that day fortnight, May 2, when four young birds were produced. I could not discover what became of the other two eggs, though I searched the nest and the ground round the tree very closely. On the 9th May they opened their eyes. The rapidity of their growth was amazing, the four quite filled the nest. Their feathers also grew so fast, that they were completely flushed on Sunday the 11th, a small space under the pinions excepted. On the following day they left the nest. Thus the number of days occupied from the commencement of laying to the perfecting the young amounted to only thirty.

“I once saw a song-thrush, which had been taken from the nest and kept in a cage for sixteen years, it then died. It was very grey about the head and back, and apparently died of old age.

“The wryneck is a rare bird here, but is found in sequestered spots near the Cornish moors, where there are large timber trees: this bird and the nuthatch are similar in their habits, but the latter does not migrate.

“I have been able to detect but two species of

the woodpecker: the green and the greater spotted; the first is common, but the other very rare.

“The hooper is sometimes met with in the autumn, but may be considered as a very rare wanderer: yet I have heard a gentleman, of great respectability, and very observing, say that he many years ago saw the nest of this bird with four young ones, which was taken in the wood close to the house at Morwell, in the Parish of Tavistock.

“The cross-bill I believe to be very rare: for though we have many orchards, I have never heard of one in this neighbourhood; and yet in the eastern part of Cornwall, about Egloskerry, where orchards are scarce, it has been occasionally found in old fir plantations.

“The grosbeak is also rare: I have seen but one specimen, killed in November, 1828.

“The cirl-bunting is found, but always near the sea-coast; there it remains all the year, and changes its plumage in the autumn, so as to become more like the yellow-hammer: some, however, come over from the continent in the spring, as they are then found in greater numbers than in the winter.

“Linnets, buntings, and bulfinches are common, except the reed-sparrow; which is found on the reedy banks of the Tamar below Morwell rocks.

“The mountain-finch has been taken here, but only in severe winters. The rest of the tribe are common, except the siskin.

“The pied wagtail remains here during the winter. I have seen the grey wagtail on the Tamar in June; no doubt it breeds there.

“The redstart is uncommon; but there are certain spots where a pair is found every year. Some

specimens are almost black on the back: the country folks call them fire-tails.

“Sand-martins build on the Tamar in great numbers; I have seen them on the river Cary, in the early part of March. The latest swallow I have observed was on the first of December; it was apparently a young one, but very vigorous.

“The night-jar is not uncommon here; but I have nothing to record concerning it, except that I have never been able to find its nest.

“Ring-doves are very common. The turtle-dove is seen but rarely in the autumn, solitary. I have occasionally seen flocks of a middle-sized dark blue pigeon, amounting to many hundreds, flying about the valley of the Tamar, in the latter end of autumn, the weather mild, but have never been able to procure one of them. They appear to be always on the wing in the day-time, flying very high in the air.

“Domestic poultry of every sort are here most abundant, and very cheap; I have seen a goose, weighing nine pounds, sold in Launceston market for half-a-crown. Cart-loads are taken every week from Launceston to Devonport and Plymouth by the Regraters.

“The pheasant has been introduced of late years by the Duke of Bedford, and Sir W. P. Call. The ring-necked variety is the most common.

“We have some partridges, and the quail is sometimes met with in the summer.

“Of the black grouse, some few still remain on Dartmoor, where they breed in the turf tyes. All attempts to preserve this beautiful bird are unsuccessful. The great extent of the moor, while it is the sole protection of a few individuals, renders it impossible to

defend them from the depredations of the miners and turf-cutters, who frequent the moor.

“Of the great Norfolk plover (*edinenus*) a specimen was killed on Dartmoor, Oct. 5, 1831, by F. Scoble Willisford, Esq.: it weighed seventeen ounces. This bird was a female. In the stomach we found the elytra and legs of a small black beetle. It is seldom met with so far west, and was not known to the moormen. By the description given us, another had been shot a few days before at Widdecomb-in-the-Moor, probably the male of this.

“The lapwing and golden plover are common enough in the cultivated lands during the severity of winter: the former breeds in great numbers on all our moors; and the natives assured me that the golden plover bred in Fox Tor mire, which is a vast and dismal swamp on Dartmoor.

“Ring dotterals are found in large flocks, in company with stints, &c., on the sea-coast, and in the estuary of the Tamar.

“The sandpiper retires in pairs to the interior, in the latter end of April, and is found on all the rivers of this country during the breeding season.

“The oyster-catcher is rather a scarce bird; but a few pairs are found, especially on the north coast, in the summer and autumn.

“The water-crake I have never seen; but the water-rail is very common, as is also the water-owl, which is found on all our rocky streams.

“Dr. Turner, as quoted by Ray, says that the *rail* he never saw nor heard of but in Northumberland. Hereabout it is not uncommon, and in the neighbourhood of Ivy Bridge three couple have been shot in one day by a single sportsman.

“The kingfisher is found in greatest numbers near the sea; they are rather uncommon far inland.

“I once saw a specimen of the spoonbill, which was taken in one of the creeks which communicates with Hakeavre.

“The bittern is very rare, and only met with in severe winters, such as was that of 1831-32, when a great number was killed in this district.

“The curlew breeds on all our moors, and is found on our coast during the winter months. The whimbrel is not so common.

“I know but one heronry in this immediate neighbourhood, which is at Warleigh, the seat of the Rev. W. Radcliffe.

“In January, 1832, a waggoner passing over Whitchurch Down saw a large bird rise from the road-side close to him; he struck it down with his whip, and it was presented to me by C. Willesford, Esq. of Tavistock. The bird was evidently exhausted by fatigue and hunger. The following is the description of it:—Length two feet nine inches, breadth three feet six inches; bill six and a half inches, leg five and a half; middle toe, which is pectinated, five and a half; tail-feathers twelve; fore part of the head black; hind part of ditto rufous, the feathers forming a small crest. Back part of the neck rusty ash colour, front part of ditto white streaked with black, the streaks growing larger as they descend to the breast, where they are long and loose: these spots are formed by the feathers of the fore part of the neck having their inner webs black, the outer webs being white. The back is brown, each feather being edged with rust colour, as are also the greater and less wing-coverts. Quill feathers black, fading into rust colour on the inner

web. Two inside toes webbed to the first joint. I find no description of heron with which this agrees so well as the purple heron (*Ardea purpurea*, Lin.) of which Montagu says, 'that not more than two of this species have been met with in this country.' It may, therefore, be considered as one of our rarest stragglers.

"A woodcock, weighing only seven ounces, was shot at Trebartha, in the year 1833: it was in very perfect plumage, and excellent condition.

"The common snipe and the dunling breed on Dartmoor, but the jack snipe leaves us in the spring.

"Of what are usually called fen birds we have but few, and they are only met with occasionally, driven most probably out of their course, during their migration, by adverse winds.

"The water-hen is common on the Tamar; but the coot seldom visits us.

"The grey phalarope. This bird is very rare in the north of England, according to Bewick. Scarcely an autumn passes but I have a specimen or two sent me. Mr. Jackson, of East Looe, informs me that on the 27th and 28th Oct. 1831, heavy gale S.S.W., great numbers of the grey phalarope appeared on the coast, in flocks of about fifty each. They invariably alighted on the sea and swam with ease and elegance among the breakers, and darted to and fro after maggots and chrysalides. They were by no means shy, but appeared lean and fatigued.

"Baron-bills, called in Cornwall murre, guillemots, and puffins, or naths, abound on the north coast of Cornwall about Boscastle and in the parish of St. Ginnys.

"The great northern diver. I saw a specimen of this bird alive, in full plumage, at Plymouth, in the

month of July, about twelve years ago. It was taken at sea by some fishermen, who were carrying it about as a curiosity. I do not recollect on what they fed it.

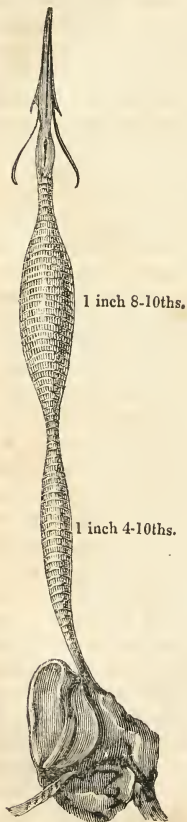
“The great imber is often seen on the coast in Whitsand Bay in the summer, and very high up the Tamar in winter.

“Teons are often found on the sea-coast, and they have been killed on the Tamar.

“Of gulls, the great gull is rare. Out of the stomach of one, answering to the description of the wagel, which Linnæus and Pennant treated as a distinct species, I took an entire redwing; an evidence of its indiscriminate voracity.

“*Larus canus*, the common gull. We have a curious emigration of these birds in the spring; they leave the sea-coast and appear in the grass lands in flocks of five, ten, or fifteen, in search of the caterpillars of beetles, which at that time are produced under the surface. The time of their appearance varies from February till March, and they disappear the beginning of May. It is to us the first harbinger of spring. It is called in some parts hereabouts the barley bird, from the time of its appearance, at barley sowing, I suppose, as I never observed them alight anywhere but in the pastures.

“The goosander. This is so rare a bird, that Montagu, during the long period which he devoted to the study of ornithology in this county, ‘never had the good fortune to dissect a single specimen.’ Feb. 5, 1830, I dissected a male goosander, shot on the Tamar. I have the trachea in my possession; it corresponds with the description given by Willughby. And on the 9th I dissected another, which

Trachea of the Goosander.*Trachea of the Dundiver.*

resembled the former in every respect. At the same time I dissected a dundiver: it was a female: there was nothing remarkable in the trachea, excepting perhaps that it was a little wider and flatter at the upper part than at the divarication of the bronchia. These two last were killed at one shot by Mr. Walter Wekes, of Bradstone, out of a flock of seven goosanders and dundivers.

“The dundiver is found here, a single specimen or so, every winter.

“There is still much obscurity concerning the history of these birds; some contending that the dundiver is the female of the goosander, others that they are of distinct species. In the year 1832 I dissected a bird in the plumage of the dundiver. The trachea (of which I have given a drawing) is so very different from that of the goosander, that I cannot believe this bird to be a young goosander in its immature plumage. Still, however, we want the female of the goosander. I am inclined to think, from the number of specimens I have examined, that there are two sorts of birds with the plumage of the dundiver, one very much larger than the other, and of which I possess a specimen: this may be the female of the goosander. The male of the smaller species may continue in the same plumage of the female, without changing when at maturity.

“Of the smew or white nun, and the red-headed smew or weasel-headed coot, I have seen specimens shot on the Tamar far inland.

“In January, 1830, many wild swans were killed in this district. In this severe season the common wild goose was seen only at the beginning of winter. When the frost set in severe, this bird, together

with the widgeon and others of the duck tribe, which usually remain with us during the winter, retired most probably further to the south, and were succeeded by the wild swan, the white-fronted or laughing goose, the scaup, goosander, and the dundiver, birds seldom seen in this latitude.

“The corvorant is not rare, but not so common as the shay, which is numerous on the north as well as the south coast.

“The gannet is sometimes taken by the fishermen during the summer. Ray calls it a Cornish bird.”

So concludes Mr. Johnes' account of our birds: I will not add more than the assurance that

I am, dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

ANNA E. BRAY.

LETTER XXI.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

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CONTENTS.—Introductory to Mr. Bray's Letter, from the library to the drawing-room, addressed to his Wife—Inscribed Obelisk erected in the Vicarage garden—The biography of an old Stone—Search formerly made after it at Buckland Monachorum—Colloquy with the village Sexton—An Antiquary's discovery near the Blacksmith's shop—Sir Ralph Lopez presents this record of ancient days to the Writer—Account of the inscribed Stone—Polwhele's conjecture that it originally stood within a Pagan temple—Probably a memorial of a Romanized Briton—The inscription given—Various readings concerning the same—Roman and British names—The Stone bears reference to the period when the Celtic language pervaded the whole Island—Conjecture respecting its having been the Stone of an ancient barrier in the public games—Its original station—A similar Stone near Roborough Down—Inscription upon it—Various interpretations of the same—Allusion to the Dobuni—Henry and Camden quoted—The inscription on the Stone of British origin—Visit to this antiquity—Subject continued—Probable date of the erection—A third and similar Stone mentioned—Manner of its discovery—Its high antiquity—Its inscription, &c.—Removal of these relics to the Vicarage Garden—Other and curious inscribed Stones also preserved in Betsey Grimbald's Tower—An Antiquary robbed of part of his treasure—Some account of one of these antiquities—Possibly a memorial of Alfred the Great—Reasons assigned for the conjecture—Subject continued—Various readings of the inscription—Conclusion—Excursion to Over Torr-rock Basins—The Walkham—Peat carts—Bair-down opening a Kistvaen—Human bones found on the Moor—Obelisk near Bair-down.

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MY DEAR SIR,

THE following letter, on a subject that I think you will find of considerable interest, was addressed

by Mr. Bray to myself; and as I deem it better to send it to you entire, instead of making any extracts from it, I now therefore enclose it in this packet, and I trust you will be as much pleased as I have been in the perusal of its contents.

“TO MRS. BRAY.

“*Ficarage, Tavistock, March 10, 1834.*

“MY DEAREST ELIZA,

“I have seen advertised, though I have never read the work, ‘Legends of the Library at Lilies, by the Lord and Lady there.’ The public, therefore, I hope will bear to be informed that, though we occasionally may assist, or at least encourage, one another by mutual advice and criticism, we do not study together; and that, though only a partition divides us, I address this from the library to you in the drawing-room.

“I fear that you almost suspected I should never fulfil my promise of giving you some account of the inscribed stones connected with this neighbourhood; and I fear yet more that the account will rather *suffer* than *improve* by the delay. But such as it is, I now present you with it, and leave you to present it to whom you may.

“Of the lettered obelisk I have lately erected in our garden, I have often heard you say, ‘I wish it would speak, and tell me all the things it has either seen or heard, that I might note them down.’ My reply has been, that were it to open its mouth, it would but frighten you, and not only make you more nervous than you frequently are in your *speech*, but also in your *writing*. It certainly has been the silent witness of many pleasant conversations I have shared

with you whilst walking in the garden; and thus much am I disposed to personify both it and its companions as to give some account (as far as I know) of their history, I had almost said of their biography.

“I will begin then with the stone last mentioned. And first, as I have transplanted it into my garden, and from no small distance, lest it should be thought indigenous to the soil, I will notice what I think I have heard botanists call its *habitat*, or place of its natural and possibly native abode; for as soon could I believe that Deucalion converted stones into men by throwing them behind him, as that any one previous to myself had incurred either the trouble or expense to convey such a cargo of stone-crop into his garden, without, too, the least prospect of being productive.

“Having learnt from Polwhele’s ‘History of Cornwall’ (for I had not then seen his History of Devon) that an inscribed stone existed at Buckland Monachorum, distant from Tavistock about four miles, I went thither on the 28th of September, 1804, with no other clue to its discovery than that it was ‘close to the church-yard.’ On my arrival at the village I inquired for the sexton, thinking that he was the most likely person to give me information. He could hardly, however, be convinced that the object of my search could be other than the monument then but lately erected in the church to the memory of the brave defender of Gibraltar, General Lord Heathfield; considered, by some, one of Bacon’s best productions. And on my correcting him in this particular, he still perversely conjectured, from my asking about an inscription, that I sought from

him a description of the church. But on using more familiar language, and describing it as a stone post with letters upon it, he smiled, and said, 'I suppose, Sir, that must be it behind your back.' I turned round, and perceived, within a few paces from me, the subject of my inquiry. It served as a coigne to a blacksmith's shop, adjoining the entrance to the church-yard.

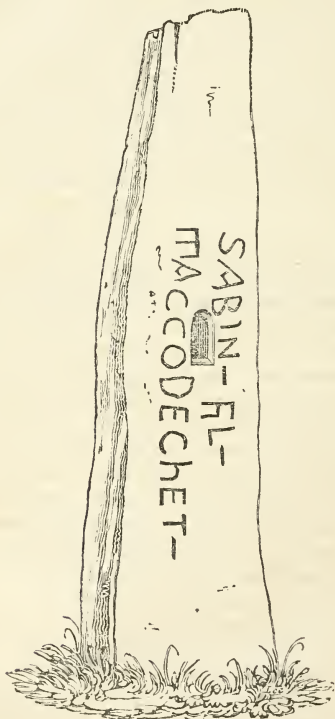
"In the course of the year 1831, (for I have mislaid my memorandum of it,) on again visiting Buckland, I found that the blacksmith's shop had recently been taken down, and the stone in question was lying with its inscription exposed towards the street, with the possibility of its being worn, if not obliterated, by every passing wheel. On applying to Sir Ralph Lopez, as lord of the manor, (intimating that I had already in my possession a stone of probably the same era,) he most kindly made me a present of it. I sent, therefore, a waggon with three horses, together with what is here called a jack, an engine for lifting it. But I nearly ran the risk of sending them in vain; for the tenants then assembled at the Court Baron refused to let my servant touch it till, fortunately, the lord himself arrived, and removed the embargo. It was brought by a circuitous route of more than five miles to avoid some precipitous hills, and erected, as before noticed, in my garden.

"It is a rude and rough pillar of granite, but certainly more picturesque than were it a more regular column. Besides, it is not only the more interesting from its resemblance to the consecrated stones or idols of our pagan ancestors, but also from its resemblance, by rising in a gently-sweeping line from the ground, and somewhat tapering at the top, to the

trunk of a stately tree. The inscription also strengthens the similitude; as it may well be compared to those rustic letters carved, more with feeling than with art, on the bark of some venerable beech. Polwhele is of opinion that (as well as many others of the same description) it originally stood within the precincts of a pagan temple, where, in consequence of the reputed sanctity of the spot, was subsequently erected a Christian church. I hope, however, that I may not be accused of the guilt of sacrilege in removing it; for it certainly deserves a better fate than to be applied to such 'base uses' as to be a 'buttress,' or 'coigne of vantage' to the 'castle' of any modern Mulciber; nay, what is worse, than to be laid prostrate in the street. It might, even at best, have been appropriated to the purpose of a gate-post, as is actually the case with another inscribed stone in the neighbourhood; and, indeed (of which more hereafter), this, or something of a similar description, seems to have been its original destination: for even in the midst of the inscription is a cavity, in the form of an oblong square, which possibly may have been cut for the reception of a latch or bar. Its obelisk form is more apparent when viewed laterally; as, at the back, which is of a smoother and blacker surface (probably caused by the contact of a contiguous stratum), it is rather acutely gathered to a point; seemingly, however, more by nature than by art.

"Polwhele, even in his 'History of Devon,' presents us only with some few particulars as to the nature and dimensions of the stone, but not with the inscription. As he is not quite exact in the dimensions, I here give them. Its height, as it at present

stands, is seven feet two and a half inches. Its breadth at the bottom is seventeen, at the top four-



teen inches. From the top to the beginning of the inscription are two feet one and a half inch. And

the cavity is eight inches long and two and a half deep.

“This, and other similar monuments, he imagines to have been Romano-British, and to have been erected to the memory of ‘a Christianized Roman.’ I should rather consider it as the memorial of a Romanized Briton, previous perhaps to the introduction of Christianity into this island. There is no cross, nor any request to pray for the soul of the departed, which are so commonly found on the sepulchral monuments of the early, or rather Romanized, Christians.

“The inscription may be read (*sepulchrum, sive memoriæ*) Sabini filii Maccodechetii. Of which the translation, I conceive, may be (the grave, the gravestone, or to the memory) of Sabinus the son of Maccodechetius. The Romans, we know, had usually three names—the *prænomen*, the *nomen*, and the *cognomen*. The *prænomen*, answering to our *Christian* or *proper* name, marked the *individual*; the *nomen* marked the *gens* or *clan*, consisting of several families; the *cognomen* marked the *familia* or immediate family. Thus in Publius Cornelius Scipio, Publius is the *prænomen*, Cornelius the *nomen*, and Scipio the *cognomen*. Sometimes there was also a fourth name, called the *agnomen*, added from some illustrious action or remarkable event. The Britons (as indeed the Romans themselves) originally had but one name. We may suppose, therefore, that this was erected at a very early stage of society, before the Britons, in imitating them, had entered into the more refined distinctions of their civilized invaders. At the same time it is evident that even these barbarians, previous to any intercourse with

the Romans, felt, in some degree, the pride of ancestry: for in this very inscription, though containing but three words, are noticed as many generations. Mac (as still in Scotch), signifying son, we have first Codechet, the grandsire, then Maccodechet his son, and lastly Sabinus his grandson. And from this, too, we may conclude that the period to which this stone has reference was when the Celtic language (of which the Gaelic or Erse is but a dialect, as also the Cornish) was not confined to Scotland, but pervaded the whole island. And, according to the opinion of antiquaries, the Celtic, at the time of the Roman invasion, was universally spoken all over the west of Europe.

“From the cavity or mortise, above alluded to, nearly in the centre of it, and calculated to receive a bar, I am inclined to think that this might be one of the stones of an ancient barrier; erected, not improbably, at a spot set apart for the celebration of public games. These, among the earliest nations, and even among the Greeks and Romans, were generally of a religious nature. And as the Celts are now, I believe, universally admitted to be more ancient than either of these nations, might not, I ask, the circus of the latter be taken from the Celtic circle, and their stadium or cursus from the Celtic avenue or parallelitha?

“We first hear of this stone, where, perhaps, it was originally placed, at Buckland Monachorum, or Monks’ Buckland, and close to the church-yard. Now we know that in the early ages of Christianity spots already sacred were generally chosen on which to erect a church, that the heathen might thus be the better conciliated to a change of religion.

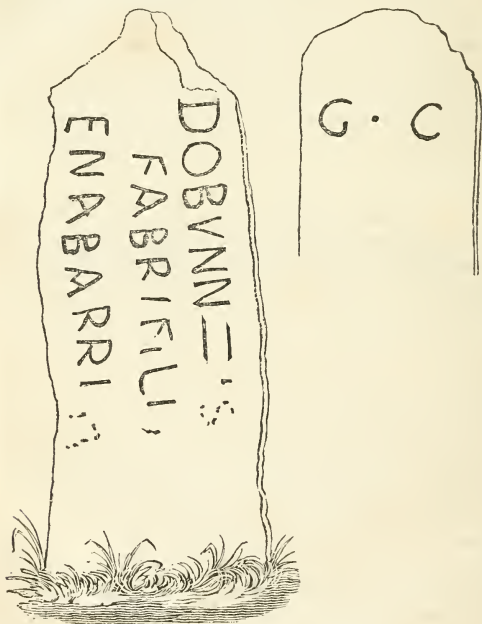
“Whether for the purpose of showing him greater honour, or because it was at hand, and on that account made use of, it is not unlikely that the Romanized Britons dedicated this stone, at his death, to the memory of one who was descended from those their Celtic ancestors by whom it had originally been erected. It is evident, I think, that it could not have been converted to the purpose of a gate-post (as is another stone in that neighbourhood) subsequent to the inscription; as the letters, by being lessened in size, have been made to accommodate themselves to the interruption occasioned by the cavity. Nor is it likely that so large and lofty a stone would originally have been selected for a common gate-post, whilst, on the other hand, its size and height would naturally have recommended it in constructing a grand barrier by which to regulate the public games.”

“There is a stone, probably of about the same era as the preceding, which may be found by following the lane leading from the rock on Roborough Down to Buckland Monachorum till you come to a turning on the right hand that will bring you to a field, of which it forms the gate-post. I am thus particular in my directions, as, in searching for it myself, I rambled without success for miles, and that too for several days, having received no other information than that it was a stone in a hedge near Roborough Down.

“The inscription contains three names; but it may be doubted whether they all are the names of indi-

vidual persons, or whether one may not be of a professional, and another of a national description.

“Various interpretations have suggested themselves. Some of these I shall mention, and leave the reader to determine for himself.



“The grave-stone—‘of Dobunnius Faber, the son of Enabarrus.’

—‘Of Dobunnius the smith,’ &c.

—‘Of Faber, one of the Dobuni,’ &c.

“Faber, in later ages, was no uncommon name. But I am not aware of any nearer approximation to it among the Romans themselves than Fabricius. A skilful workman in any art (and more particularly in metal, for Faber has more especial reference to a smith or worker of iron) would be of such paramount importance in barbarous ages, that his trade or occupation would naturally become not only an addition to, but in itself a proper name. And probably it is so in the present instance. Indeed there is still no name more common than Smith in our own language. And it is no less probable that the first name in the inscription is that of his people; as Dobunnius alone, without adding the smith, would be a sufficient designation, particularly as he is also stated to be the son of Enabarrus; and few persons, it may be supposed, unless they were chieftains themselves, or the sons of chieftains, would be honored with any monument at all. Nor is it likely that, were there two names, the first would have been British and the second Roman, but, *vice versâ*, out of compliment to their masters. And here I must be allowed to add—as possibly throwing some light on the date, and perhaps also connexion of these stones in point of time, as they certainly were in regard to place—that Sabinus, to whom the former was erected, might have been so called in compliment to a Roman officer of that name, the brother of Vespasian, who was afterwards emperor. These, with others under Aulus Plautius, commanded the army consisting of four complete legions, with their auxiliaries and cavalry, making about fifty thousand men, which was sent, A. D. 43, by Claudius into Britain. See Henry, vol. i. p. 30.

“If, instead of being a variety in spelling, the reduplication of N signifies the gen. pl., namely *Duboniorum*, the figure $\equiv$ might purposely be used for two instead of II., lest the latter should be taken for the gen. sing. of a person. As there seems to be some trace of letters at the end of the first line, these might indicate that he was of the second cohort of the *Dobuni*. Cohort, we know, was often used indefinitely for a band or company of any number of men.

“Henry (p. 32) tells us that ‘a part of the *Dobuni* submitted to the Romans. These were probably the subjects of *Cogidunus*, who became so great a favourite of *Claudius*, and succeeding emperors, for his early submission and steady adherence to their interest.’ Also vol. ii. p. 459 App.: ‘The second legion, which was surnamed *Augusta*, or the *August*, came into Britain A. D. 43, in the reign of *Claudius*, under the command of *Vespasian* (who was afterwards emperor), and continued here near four hundred years to the final departure of the Romans. It was on this account that this legion was also called *Britannica*, or the *British*.’ Camden says that ‘The *Cassii* had conquered the *Dobuni* before the arrival of *Cæsar*, who made the prince of this country commander-in-chief of the forces of the whole island.’ Also—‘The *Dobuni* inhabited Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. Their name seems to be derived from *Duffen*, a British word signifying deep or low, because inhabiting for the most part a plain, and valleys encompassed with hills. And I am the more induced to be of this opinion, because I find that *Dion* calls these people by a word of the same signification, *Bodunni*, if there is not a transposition of the

letters. For *Bodo*, or *Bodun*, in the antient language of the Gauls, as Pliny informs us, doth signify *Deep*.’

“Whether, therefore, the name on this stone be that of an individual or of a nation, it certainly is of British origin. It is by no means improbable that the spot near which it stands (in the vicinity of Rorborough rock) might have been a military station for the Romans or their auxiliaries and allies, as, from its elevation, it commands an extensive horizon, including the beacons of Brent Tor, and other tors on Dartmoor, and is also within a few miles of Tadmerton, probably the antient Tamare.

“The reader may possibly lament that he has wasted a few minutes in reading these observations; but let him know, for his comfort, that I have wasted many hours, not only in attempting to interpret, but even to decipher the inscription. In order to get what, I believe, is technically called ‘a rubbing,’ I have gone over and over again to the spot where the stone is situated, amply provided with silver paper (it ought, I am told, to have been tea-paper), black-lead, and brushes of various kinds. But, sometimes owing to the wind, and sometimes to the rain, I was never able to take any thing like an impression, and was forced, therefore, to content myself with different sketches in pencil, of which I have tried to select the best.

“With a hope of succeeding better at my leisure, and perhaps, also, with the assistance of the sun when, at a certain point in its course, it would illumine only the surface and throw the letters into shade (as the inscription on Pompey’s Pillar, in

Egypt, which had so puzzled the French *sçavans*, was at last thus deciphered by some officers of our army), I set on foot a negociation for its transfer to my garden, as a companion to my two other stones. But though antiquarian covetousness was seconded by beauty, in the person of one of the daughters of Sir Anthony Buller, who resides near the spot, the farmer was inexorable, and it there remains as a gate-post to his field.

“ I must be allowed to state that on the reverse of the inscription may be seen G. C. It will add but little to the presumption of my former conjectures if I venture to suggest whether this may not stand for Galba Cæsare. Servius Sulpicius, the seventh of the twelve Cæsars, was surnamed Galba, from the smallness of his stature. The word signifies a mite or maggot; but, according to some, it implies, in the language of Gaul, fatness, for which the founder of the Sulpitian family was remarkable. Galba was next succeeding emperor but one to Claudius, who will be found mentioned in the following extract from Henry, vol. i. p. 260: ‘ Cogidunus, who was at that time (as his name imports) prince of the Dobuni, recommended himself so effectually to the favour of the Emperor Claudius, by his ready submission, and other means, that he was not only continued in the government of his own territories, but had some other states put under his authority. This prince lived so long, and remained so steady a friend and ally to the Romans, that his subjects, being habituated to their obedience in his time, never revolted, nor stood in need of many forts or forces to keep them in subjection.’ Perhaps the reader

will good-naturedly admit, and be thankful for, the following lines of Shakspeare by way of apology for this whimsical digression :—

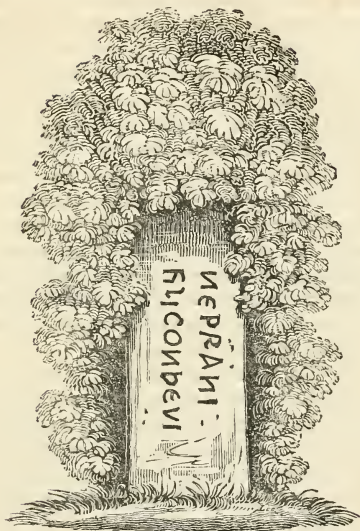
‘ Figures pedantical, these summer flies
Have blown me full of *maggot* ostentation :
I do forswear them.’

“My mind being not a little occupied with the inscription I had seen at Buckland (not then even surmising that there was another near it, namely, the one last noticed), I asked my father, who was born and lived at Tavistock, if he had ever heard of any inscribed stone in our immediate neighbourhood. He said that, about twenty years ago, presentment was made, at the Court Leet of the Duke of Bedford, of a large stone forming part of the pavement of West Street, as a nuisance; it having become so worn and slippery as to be dangerous to horses. As his Grace’s agent, therefore, he had ordered it to be taken up, when, if his memory failed not, he thought he had seen letters on the under part of it. The stone, he added, had afterwards been placed as a bridge over the mill-leat near Head weir. This weir is about half a mile distant from Tavistock, and crosses the river Tavy for the purpose of conveying a stream of water, here called a leat, to the parish mills.

“On visiting the spot, I found the stone. Its smooth surface was still uppermost, and the bottom of it so close to the stream, that I could only get my hand under it, and on doing so, fancied that I felt letters. On the strength of this I caused it to be taken up, and found I had conjectured rightly. The letters, fortunately, had been twice preserved;

first, from the friction of wheels and the tread of horses and passengers in the street; and secondly, from the slower but scarcely less certain erosion of the passing waves. I resolved, therefore, to bring it to a place of greater safety; and on the 22d of October, 1804, about a month after I first visited the stone at Buckland, had it removed, and placed by the side of the arch, then within the grounds of the Abbey-house, and now within the precincts of the churchyard. This I the more particularly notice, as an engraving of it in this situation, has, I believe, appeared in a little topographical work called the 'Antiquarian Cabinet.'

"On my quitting the Abbey-house for the Vicarage, I brought it hither and placed it where now it stands, near the drawing-room window. Some of my friends, perhaps thinking it out of place, compared it to a sentinel. In some degree to obviate this, and to hide a defect not much in character with a soldier, namely, what might be called a hunch back (for the wheels, I suppose, had worn it into this shape), I planted at its foot some Irish ivy. This has so wonderfully increased, particularly at the top, that, on cutting part of it away in front, to render the inscription legible, it has assumed, curiously enough, the form of a sentry box. I felt loth, I confess, to cut away more of the ivy than was absolutely necessary for this purpose, from the circumstance that, for many years, a couple of blackbirds have built their nest there, or frequented it; which is the more remarkable from their general shyness, and, seemingly at least, their aversion to the haunts of men.



“The inscription, as the first already noticed, contains the names of father and son ; viz., Nepranus, the son of Condevus. Some, perhaps, may be inclined to read Conbevus, as the fourth letter is more like our small b than D. The rudeness of the sculpture, however, may account for this. And indeed Mr. Samuel Lysons, in his ‘History of Devonshire,’ has not hesitated, on a wood-cut, to represent it completely formed as the latter. I am not much surprised at this inaccuracy, from the hasty sketch he made, in my presence, when I first directed his attention to the stone in question several years ago ;

and only mention it now that the reading proposed may be supported by the opinion of so great an antiquary. With respect to Condé, in Latin Condate (and to which perhaps we may trace Condevus), there are several towns of this name in France. It is an appellation in antient geography, probably of Celtic origin, bearing relation to the idea of *confluent*, and means a place built on the spot where two rivers meet. There was a Roman station, also, of the name of Condate, in this island, as appears from the second iter of Antoninus*. The person here commemorated, therefore, may have taken his name from one of these towns, as does one of the branches of the Bourbon family in France. At any rate the name is of British or Celtic origin.

“Of the stones which I now propose to notice, my earliest remembrance is, that when I was a boy they were lying in a little plot of garden-ground over the gateway of the Abbey commonly known by the name of Betsy Grimbal’s Tower. I thence, several years ago, removed and placed them as on a kind of shrine in front of the arch before mentioned.

“On exchanging my residence for the vicarage, I restored them pretty nearly to their former situation, by placing them beneath instead of on the top of the gateway. They were there more accessible, and, as I imagined, equally safe. In this respect, however, I was unfortunately mistaken: for, two or three years since, on going to show them to a friend, the stone marked 2 was no where to be found. I was the more provoked at the loss, as I am not without suspicion that I myself, though altogether unintentionally, was in some degree accessory to the theft: for,

* Rees’s Cyclo., and Henry’s Hist.

only a few weeks before, having but just mounted my horse; it shied at the noise or motion of a mason who was working near the gate, and I sent back my servant to tell him that it was a very improper place for him thus to be cutting a stone, and begged he would remove it. I have reason to think that it was the very stone in question, and that he had no other view in purloining it than to convert it into a pig's trough.

“The other stone I have placed, for shelter as well as security, beneath the trellised-shed before the door of my house. I am not without suspicion, however, that not only masons but antiquaries have little fear either of lares or penates; though at the feet of the former there should be the figure of a dog barking (with the words ‘cave canem’), and though the latter be placed in the inmost and most secret parts of the house. Indeed it may be apprehended that too many might be tempted to steal even the household gods themselves.

“Whether these stones were but parts of one and the same, it is difficult to determine. If they were, it is probable that there existed an intermediate portion. Certain it is that they were of the same description of freestone, were of the same thickness, and had upon them letters of precisely the same form and workmanship. By no greater stretch of imagination than antiquaries are sometimes known to indulge in, and perhaps with not much greater credulity than they frequently possess, one if not both these stones might plausibly enough be considered as commemorative of Alfred the Great. There are parts of two words, one immediately below the other, the former ending in *fridus*, the other in *nus*. May

they not, therefore, be Alfridus Magnus? The orthography, at least in early times, was far from being settled. ‘Anglo-Saxon writers, and among these the king himself, commonly write his name Ælfred, and this orthography is frequently followed on ancient coins : in some instances, however, as on a coin in the British Museum, the name is written Aelfred : in other writers, and indeed on some coins too, we find Elfred *.’ Nay, it was not only written Alfredus but also Aluredus †. But this respects only the beginning of the word. We may naturally infer, however, that there was some degree of uncertainty in regard to the termination also. In Smith, ‘De Republica Anglorum,’ we find our Alfred, the son of Ethelwolfe, written Alfredus ; but Alfred, the son of Oswy, he spells Alfridus ; whilst Rapin and Hume call them both Alfred.



“A pretty strong objection, however, to this hypothesis is, that Alfred died A. D. 901 ; and the Abbey was not begun till 961 ! I might say it

* Penny Cyclopædia.

† Ainsworth, &c.

was his cenotaph, or that it was removed from the place of his sepulture. However much disposed the monks might be to avail themselves of his name, either as a king on earth or as a saint in heaven, the expression *situs est hic* is too strong for a cenotaph, and would accord better with his relics, which we might easier believe they would pretend to have, rather than that they carried away his gravestone. It is not a little remarkable, however, that his remains were transported more than once from the place of their original interment. ‘His body,’ says Rapin, ‘was buried first at *Winchester*, next removed into the church of the *New Monastery*; and lastly, his body, monument, church and monastery were all removed (about two hundred years after) without the north gate of the city, since called the *Hide*.’ Nor indeed is it perhaps less remarkable that, *conditor a*, on the other stone, may mean *conditor Angliæ legum*, as well as *conditor Abbatiae*. ‘And Alfred,’ says Blackstone*, ‘is generally styled by the same historians the *legum Anglicanarum conditor*, as Edward the Confessor is the *restitutor*.’ And possibly, after all, it will be considered not the least remarkable of these coincidences that there were no less than three monks of Winchester who became Abbots of Tavistock; namely, Livingus, who died in 1038; Aldred, his successor, who died in 1069; and Philip Trentheful, who was confirmed as Abbot in 1259. Is it altogether improbable that one of these, from the veneration he may naturally be supposed to feel for the name of Alfred, might have placed this memorial of him in a spot to which he had been himself translated, when he remembered

* Vol. i., p. 66.

that the removal of the very remains of this great monarch had taken place either for their greater safety or greater honour? Or the mere estimation in which he was held by the fraternity at large, which is sufficiently proved by his translation of '*Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiæ*' being printed at their press, may account for their pretending to possess either his grave-stone or his relics, though each might be equally suppositious*.

"The monastery called the '*Newen Mynstre*,' and afterwards Hyde Abbey, which was founded by Alfred, and completed by his son Edward, being in an unhealthy and inconvenient situation, 'a new and magnificent church and monastery were erected just without the north wall of the city, on the spot called Hyde-meadow, to which the monks removed in 1110, carrying with them the remains of several illustrious personages who had been buried in the former Abbey, among which were those of Alfred himself, and some of his descendants. The church and monastery were soon afterwards demolished, and even the tombs of Alfred, and other eminent persons, were despoiled. Precisely on the space occupied by the Abbey-church, was some time ago erected a bridewell, or house of correction, on the plan of the benevolent Howard.' And 'between fifty and sixty

* I probably was led into this error of confounding together two separate works, from having somewhere seen it noticed that an Anglo-Saxon grammar was published here; and knowing that Alfred had translated Boethius into Anglo-Saxon. This translation, however was not printed, I believe, till 1698, at Oxford. But perhaps I may be indulged in the conjecture that the monks possessed this work in MS., and might attach such value to a more recent version as to commit it to the press, from knowing that the original had previously been translated by so renowned a prince.

years ago (I extract this from from Rees's Cyclopædia), among the remains of the buildings, was found a stone with this inscription in Saxon characters, "Alfred Rex DCCCLXXXI."

"This date is twenty years before his death. It might otherwise have been taken for his gravestone. Some mystery we find even here is connected with the memory of this illustrious personage.

"With respect to the stone marked No. 2 (if it be not connected with the preceding), many conjectures present themselves; but I shall offer only two, as requiring the least addition; namely,

Indolem

Conditor (Abbatiae)

Præstet amœnam :

which we may suppose a prayer that the founder (for *O Thou that hearest prayer* is not, be it remembered, confined by Romanists to God) might continue his favorable disposition to the Abbey; or, if we imagine the sentence to refer to the person to whose memory the stone was inscribed, we may complete the inscription in some such form as the following :

(Oramus ut ille)

Indolem (eandem quam)

Conditor (abbatiæ nostræ)

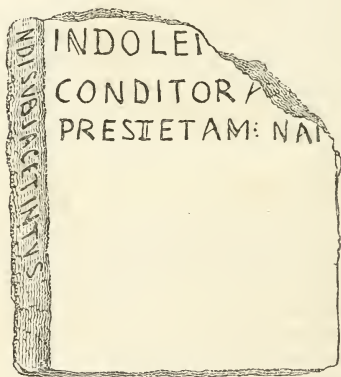
Præstet. Amen. Amen.

"Let us pray that he may show the same disposition as did the founder of our Abbey. Amen. Amen."

"There can be no doubt, however, that the lateral sentence may be thus completed—(In spe resurge) ndi sub jacet intus. And from the word

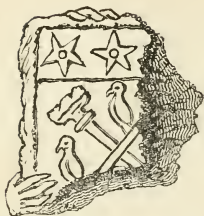
intus we may at once conclude that the stone formed the cover of the stone coffin or sarcophagus.

2



“Some years since, previous to placing the painted glass in the window of his dining-room at Endsleigh, the Duke of Bedford applied to me for a sketch of the arms of the Abbey of Tavistock; and I ventured to emblazon them from the description contained in Prince’s ‘Worthies of Devon.’

“I find, however, from a fragment of Beer stone sent to me in September, 1833, by Mr. Rundle, builder, who met with it among other pieces of sculpture in taking down part of the brewery here, that there is a want of correctness, not only in myself, but even in Prince. He describes the arms as ‘Gules, two crosiers saltireways between two martlets, or, in a chief argent three mullets sable.’



“I instantly recognized the mullets, but I was at a loss respecting the crosier; the martlets, also, must have been four instead of two. I was satisfied, however, that it is a fragment of the arms of the Abbey when I found crosiers thus described in Fosbroke’s ‘*Encyclopædia of Antiquities*.’ ‘They were sometimes barely curled, sometimes like beadles’ staves,—more like maces than crosiers.’

“From two hands that still remain at the top and side, it is evident that the shield was supported by two angels, one on the dexter, and the other on the sinister side.

“On the 30th October, 1833, Mr. Rundle sent me also another stone, with an inscription in black letter painted on a white fillet, being a kind of upper border to the same, the ground of which was vermillion. The words are *Regina celi* (cæli) *letare* (lætare) *a*——probably Alleluia. Rejoice, O Queen of heaven—Hallelujah. Of course they are addressed to the Virgin Mary, and possibly were placed on her altar.

“In November, 1833, Mr. Rundle also sent me two other stones. One seemed to be a kind of

plinth, on which, in red characters, was painted what I take to be the contraction of *Jesu*,* which is followed by *fili dei miserere . . . o . . .* probably *nostri*. The other was the capital of a column or pilaster, having at the top gilt quatrefoils, whilst at the bottom are bunches of grapes painted red. Between them is the inscription (as far as I am able to decipher it) *Orate pro divo E* The latter word, perhaps, might have been Eustachio, to whom the parish church was dedicated; so that it is difficult to decide whether these sculptured remains were taken from the conventual or the parochial church, possibly from both, when the former was pulled down and the latter freed from its idolatries (for there stood in it the altar of St. Eustace) at the time of the Reformation. It is probable that they were not removed for preservation, but used, when wanted, as mere materials for other buildings.

“Thus, my dearest Eliza, have I endeavoured to fulfil my promise of contributing towards your work by giving some account of the inscribed stones, &c., connected with this neighbourhood, and remain,

“Your faithful and affectionate husband,

“E. A. BRAY.”

Before I make up this packet for Keswick I shall add the following extracts from Mr. Bray's Journal respecting an

* I am indebted to Mr. Kempe for the information that *ihu* stands for *Jesu*: an adoption of the *h* for the great eta. “Jesus is written I. H. S. (in antient MSS.) which is the Greek *ΙΗΣ*, or *ιης*, an abbreviation of *Ιησους*.”—*Casley's Catalogue of the Royal Library*, pref., p. xxiii.

EXCURSION ON DARTMOOR TO OVER TOR.

“8th August, 1832.—Having seen but the basins on Pew Tor, and from their elevation being unable to reach them, Mrs. Bray expressed a wish to wash her hands in one of those that were the most accessible on Dartmoor. The basin called Mistor pan being the largest, and, if I recollected rightly, not difficult of access, we got out of the carriage, near the Merri-vale circles, with the intention of paying it a visit. But it was at no small distance, with a considerable ascent all the way, principally amid rocks, the weather was extremely warm, and my companion very weak from illness. We gave up, therefore, our original design, and resolved to content ourselves with exploring a neighbouring tor, which we afterwards learnt was called Over Tor. I was the more induced to do so from never having visited it before; and probably for the same reason that, had it not been for what I have above stated, we should not have visited it now; namely, because it seemed but insignificant in itself, and because my mind was occupied with a far more important undertaking, that of reaching Mistor.

“But Over Tor, though of no great magnitude, most amply repaid us for the visit. Probably from not being so elevated, and therefore less exposed to ‘the pelting of the pitiless storm,’ it is less bare and denuded than most others. Indeed it is almost covered with lichen and pendant moss: so much so, that it forcibly reminded me of grotto-work; to which the cavities, that are here more numerous than usual, not a little contributed. Even some of the incumbent strata, possibly from being thin, and little else

than laminæ, when I struck them with my umbrella sounded hollow. A flower, also, in the shape of a white pointed star, glittered amid the dark verdure of the moss, and might well be compared to the sparkling shells with which these artificial structures are generally decorated. That art, too, had been used even here, is evident; for Mrs. Bray had the pleasure of herself discovering a rock-basin. And as we have not only the classic, or at least far-fetched authority of Venus's Looking-glass, but the nearer one of Lady Lopez's hat, (being no other than the covering of an old lime-kiln,) I may be allowed, perhaps, to designate this as Mrs. Bray's wash-hand basin. It had water in it at the time; and though it was not enough for the purpose above stated, it was enough to enable us, in imitation of the ceremony to which, probably, it was formerly applied, to sprinkle each other. The basin, I should think, is about a foot in diameter at the bottom*. The exterior brim stands boldly prominent, thin, and somewhat curved (at least on its upper surface) like the cup of a convolvulus. Standing, or, perhaps, seated beside it, the Druid might scatter his lustrations on his votaries below; whether they were the multitude generally at the base of the rock, or such select few as might be admitted nearer for initiation on a kind of natural platform, about five feet below, composed of the rock itself.

“Mrs. Bray was fortunate also in making two other discoveries, namely, a fallen rock on which were two basins; and a fallen tolmén. I already have alluded

* I subsequently found it by admeasurement fourteen inches; and one foot and a half above.

to some young men, who, on one of them coming of age, or rather on the expiration of his apprenticeship, which was probably simultaneous, celebrated this most important era by throwing down some rocks on Dartmoor. I never could learn the exact spot, but had reason to imagine that it was on or near Mistor. I now am satisfied that it could be no other than Over Tor; and except, perhaps, the overthrow of the Cromlech at the Cursus, they did no further mischief. This no doubt was enough, and more than enough; and well would they have deserved the same sentence, could it have been put in execution, that was passed on, and undergone, by that Lieutenant in the Navy who threw down the Logan rock in Cornwall, and was forced to put it up again. Were it not for this latter circumstance, I should hardly have attributed the violence so visible on this tor to human agency, but to an earthquake or some convulsion of nature. But the power of the wedge, though perhaps the simplest, is almost incalculable. The rock itself, I conceive, afforded materials for its own destruction.

“The basins are generally to be found on the upper lamina; between which and the next a stone may easily be inserted, and, being struck and forced inward by another, and that by a third, one end of this thin mass is elevated, till, by a corresponding depression, the other end preponderates, and the summit of this lofty structure which had defied a thousand storms not only falls below, but carries ruin and destruction far around. Indeed, I cannot but think that the very name of Over Tor is owing to this overthrow of the rocks, which, whether

natural or artificial, must strike the most inattentive observer. At any rate the etymology is not so far-fetched as St. Mary Overy, a name given to a church in Southwark, as I was informed by a learned antiquary, from the circumstance that near it people were accustomed to go over the ferry to the city. Certain it is that you can trace this cataract of rocks, as you might fancy a cataract of water suddenly arrested and fixed by ice.

“The rock on which this elevated pile was poised is still as horizontal as the base itself beneath it. The second rock has slid from it, but, finding a *point d'appui* on a kind of platform which is itself of considerable elevation, remains only in an oblique position. The third rock is completely pendant from the platform, but is prevented falling by the fourth, that has found a base on some rocks below, and thus completes this accidental bridge: for a chasm of no small dimensions is formed by it, and an ox we saw had retired to it for shade and shelter. The fifth, on which are the basins, is perpendicular. Contiguous to this, and thrown, I think, out of their position by its falling against them, are two rocks, which we ventured to consider were tolmen. They rest on a rock whose face is as smooth and perpendicular as a wall, thirteen feet and a half in length, and seven feet in height. There seems to have been a semicircular inclosure of stones in front of it; and, from the upper edge of this wall, one of the two rocks projects three feet and a half, like the sounding-board of a pulpit. Three or four stones, somewhat similar to that which supports the tolmen at Staple Tor, are lying under them, and were

probably applied to that purpose here. Were this the case, there is reason to conclude that these tol-mens, which seem to have been parallel, if not resting against one another, were overthrown by the shock occasioned by the fall of the rock on which are the basins; for it seems to have struck them near their point of conjunction, and, causing them to open to the right and left, deranged their supports and destroyed their equilibrium. The fallen basins are of an oblong shape, two feet by one, and about four inches and a half deep. The view from behind this tor (itself forming the foreground, rich in colour and every possible variety of outline) is truly magnificent. Its more elevated points afford a bold contrast both in shape and shadow to the faint and sweeping undulations of the distant horizon. Plymouth Sound, Mount Edgcombe and Hamoaze are conspicuous and attractive objects. Walkhampton tower (or possibly that of Sampford Spiney) glitters in the view, whilst the bold mass of Vixen Tor, and the crowned summit of Pew Tor beyond it, form a broad and sombre background for Merri-vale bridge, and the sparkling river Walkham that winds beneath.

“I here may mention that on approaching this tor we found several mounds of earth, from about five and twenty to thirty paces in circumference. They are not in the usual shape of barrows, being of an oblong square, whilst the latter are generally round or oval. From their proximity to the circles, the cursus, and the tor, which, from its basins, &c., we have thus connected with Druidism, one might be tempted to imagine that these were places of

sepulture for persons of that order; but on my afterwards asking Hannaford, the farmer, if he knew anything about them, he said they were rabbits' burrows; and I am inclined to think he is perfectly right.

"But should some antiquary be hereafter taken in, and describe the labours of Watts (for such was the name, I was told, of the builder of these warrens) as those of the Celts or Druids, it may be allowed to excite a smile but not a sneer. There are also heaps of stones, evidently the work of art, though now almost covered with moss. The stones are mostly placed edgeways, forming a kind of low flat arch, with hollows and interstices beneath. Indeed, they may be said to be built rather than thrown together. These, too, were probably applied to the purpose above stated, namely a shelter for rabbits. But where there are so many indisputable vestiges of the Druids, it is little to be wondered at that an antiquary should be thinking more of them than of a warren. Besides, many of the barrows, kairns, kistvaens, &c., of which traces still remain near the cursus, are in themselves of far less magnitude and importance. Watts, one would think, took an anticipated delight in puzzling the antiquaries. We might say of him in the words of Horace, *Diruit, edificat* (he pulls down, he builds up); but, instead of continuing the quotation, *mutat quadrata rotundis* (he changes square things into round), we might reverse it, and say, that he has achieved yet greater labours, namely, succeeded in squaring the circle: for, to make an inclosure near his cottage, of which the foundation still remains, he has converted what was probably a circle into an oblong square.

THE WALKHAM*.

Close to Merrivale bridge, I was shocked (for I can use no milder expression) to see in the bed of this truly romantic river some of the largest rocks split with wedges, and, instead of presenting their usual flowing outline and their dark natural colour enriched with moss and lichen, obtruding themselves on the eye, not only bare but in straight and angular deformity. It is to be hoped, however, that they will soon be removed. I am sorry to observe that they have begun to take stones for the roads from the bed of our own beautiful Tavy. But such is the march of intellect and improvement. As a further proof of its progressing even on the moor, I soon afterwards remarked a hand-bill pasted on one of the rocks near the side of the road. I could not help thinking that my inscriptions were more in character. But even these, I found, when I reached Bair-down, were beginning to be illegible. Indeed, when looking from the bridge for the name of a poet to which I had consecrated one of the rocks beneath, we could only see some faint traces of the letters when the sun shone out. It was about two o'clock, and perhaps (from the spot where we stood) it might be wholly undistinguishable at any other hour. This vanishing and reappearing excited some degree of interest, and reminded me of the effect of the Diorama. The loudest roar that then ascended from the Cowsick was occasioned by the rush of water over the rock that crosses the river, which I

* In our excursion of this day, I observed that among the various forms that Vixen Tor assumes, this lofty mass of rock has one which I have omitted when elsewhere describing them; but which now forcibly impressed itself on my fancy; namely, that of a lion sucking his paw.

learnt from Hannaford is fifty-nine feet in length—it is perfectly straight: this they once talked of converting into an obelisk.

“In the course of our journey hither, our attention had been attracted to some objects in the horizon which my companion said she could almost fancy were moving tors. They certainly appeared large objects and made but slow progress. I knew there was no road in that direction, yet they continued to follow one another in a line. At length they turned, and as they approached nearer to us, I could distinguish that they were not only dark from rising in contrast with the sky, but were black in themselves; and I almost could imagine they were a funeral procession; and, of course, that of some giant who was to lay his bones beneath some mighty kairn. But, at times, their tottering, nay, oscillating motion, like that of ships in a storm, did not exactly correspond with the solemn and steady pace observed on such occasions. And at last I found they were carts piled high with peat, working their way through the rocks, now turning and rolling to the right, and now to the left, under the guidance, now in front, now in rear, and now on either side, of men who exerted almost gigantic strength in preventing them from falling.”

EXCURSION ON DARTMOOR. KISTVAEN, &c., ON BAIR-
DOWN. 11th Sept. 1832.

“About two or three minutes walk from the house, in a north-east direction, are the remains of a kistvaen which we had long proposed to open. Three stones, about six or eight inches high, forming three sides of an oblong square, were all that

was visible. On removing some turf and rushes, we found a rough pavement around them to the extent of three or four feet. The stone at the western end (for they face pretty nearly the cardinal points) is two feet eight inches long. The northern stone is three feet ten inches; the southern about the same dimensions, and the eastern stone is wanting.

“We opened the centre, about two feet and a half; and there came to the natural substratum, a hard gravel. The stones of inclosure reached to the same depth. Hannaford, who is somewhat acquainted with what he calls these *caves*, in procuring stones for walls, &c., was of opinion that it had been opened before, and that the stone at the east, together with the covering stone, had been removed for similar purposes. I had reason afterwards fully to agree with him, for we found nothing amid the peat earth that filled the cavity but a small fragment of earthenware. It was of the very coarsest texture, somewhat smooth on one side, and extremely rough on the other. The surfaces were reddish, but the centre of a deep brown. It probably was the only remaining portion of an urn that had been broken and taken away with its contents, whatever they might be, by some previous and more fortunate explorer; though it is likely enough that the discovery gratified no other feeling than that of mere curiosity. An antiquary, perhaps, had he been present, might have decided, I will not say with what certainty, whether it was or was not the sepulchre of some chieftain or arch-Druid on the hill of Bards. About a quarter of a mile distant, immediately outside the present boundary of Bair-down, (for my father gave it up for the purpose, I believe, of building a chapel which

was never erected,) and nearly opposite the road that leads to Plymouth, I was informed by Hannaford that a person named John Kerton, among what he called 'burroughs and buildings,' found some human bones; and that he told him he could not rest till he buried them again.

"I learnt from the same authority, having previously requested him to measure it, that the erect stone or obelisk, called Bair-down Man, (probably corrupted from *men*, a stone,) is eleven feet high, and eight feet round."

The length of these extracts from Mr. Bray's Journal prevents my at present adding more than that

I am, my dear Sir,

Very sincerely and faithfully yours,

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

END OF VOL. I.

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